Kusumanjali

Śramaṇism in Early Indian Religions and Religious Life

S. R. Goyal

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by **Professor S.R. Goyal**

The Book :

The present monograph seeks to study the emergence and early growth of the Śramaṇism in India's religions and religious life. Its author Professor S. R. Goyal is a well-known scholar of ancient Indian religious history. His present work is divided into ten chapters in which the history of Śramaṇism and its role in ancient Indian religions and religious life has been delineated in detail. The first chapter of the monograph discusses the main features of Śramaṇism while the next four chapters deal with the various aspects of early Śramaṇism with special reference to the place of Śramaṇic ideas in the Vedic society. The next two that is the sixth and seventh chapters deal respectively with the lives and thought of the first twenty-three Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras and Śramaṇa Mahāvīra. The two chapters following them are devoted to the life and thought of Śramaṇa Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. The last, that is the tenth chapter discusses the data found in the early Dharmaśāstras, including the *Manusmṛti*, the *Indica* of Megasthenes, the *Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya* and the inscriptions of Aśoka on the Śramaṇas of the Maurya period. Thus the present monograph seeks to provide a comprehensive picture of Śramaṇism and Śramaṇa religions of India upto c. 300 B.C.

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The Author :

Professor S.R. Goyal is the retired Professor and Head, Department of History, JNV University, Jodhpur. Described as 'one of the five best recent historians of ancient India' by Professor David N. Lorenzen, the great Mexican Orientalist, Professor Goyal combines all the qualities associated with scientific scholarship. He has authored about forty-five voluminous works and over 150 research papers which cover so diverse fields as political history, religious history, literature, biographies, numismatics and epigraphy. He was honoured with the General Presidentship of the Silver Jubilee Congress of the Epigraphical Society of India held at Udupi in April, 1999 and was elected the Honorary Fellow of the Society. He is also to preside over the 90th Annual Conference of the Numismatic Society of India to be held at Santiniketan (West Bengal) on 1st to 3rd December, 2006.

His doctoral thesis, *A History of the Imperial Guptas* (1967), was acclaimed as 'the best analysis of the Gupta period which I have ever read' by Professor A. L. Basham (National Professor of Australia) and as 'imaginative', 'well-written' and 'a model of historiography' by Professor Eleanor Zelliot (Minnesota, U.S.A.). The various theories propounded in it are described by Professor R.C. Majumdar as 'deserving very careful consideration'.

Among his other major works are included three 'corpus-like' volumes on ancient Indian inscriptions, a monograph on recently found ancient Indian inscriptions, two volumes respectively on Kauṭilya and Megasthenes, a three volume study of ancient Indian history in about two thousand pages, a three volume study of ancient Indian numismatics, and four volumes of Great Rulers of Ancient India Series. He has also edited several works including *Indian Art of the Gupta Age.*

Professor Goyal is deeply involved with the study of the history of Indian religions, especially Buddhism. He has published two volumes entitled *A Religious History of Ancient India* (Vol. I, 1984; Vol. II, 1986), *Harsha and Buddhism* (1986), *A History of Indian Buddhism* (1987), *The Buddhist Triratna* (2003), *Indian Buddhism After the Buddha* (2003) and *Buddhism in Indian History and Culture* (2004). All these works of his have been highly acclaimed and admired both in India and abroad.

Professor Goyal has so far been honoured with four festschrifts, including *Reappraising Gupta History for S.R. Goyal* (ed. by Professor B.Ch. Chhabra et al) and *S.R. Goyal : His Multidimensional Historiography* (ed. by Professor Jagannath Agrawal and Dr. Shankar Goyal). A four volume festschrift in his honour entitled *Śrīrāmābhinandanam* (*Reconstructing Indian History for S.R. Goyal*) was published in 2003.

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S.R. GOYAL

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Dedicated to my revered teacher
Professor Govind Chandra Pande
whose constant influence and blessings
for more than half a century
have given shape and direction to
my thinking and academic pursuits

Author's Preface

Śramaṇism was an integral part of ancient Indian religious life. The Śramaṇas generally believed in *nivṛtti* ideal as opposed to the *pravṛtti* ideal of the Vedic Brāhmaṇical society. But whether the *nivṛtti* ideal was pre-Vedic and non-Vedic or it developed within the Vedic tradition itself is a question which cannot be answered easily. In the present monograph we have argued that Śramaṇism, of which *nivṛtti* ideal was one of the main features, was partly Vedic and partly non-Vedic and was characterised by numerous other features such as *peripatos* or wandering, *tapas* or asceticism (intense physical austerities including *yoga* and *dhyāna*), *brahmacharya* or celebacy, bhikshācharyā (begging of food), *gṛha-tyāga* (renunciation of householder's life), belief in *saṁsāravāda* (theory of transmigration), *karmavāda*, and *anīśvaravāda* (denial of the existence of god/gods), rejection of the authority of the Vedas, belief in tīrthaṅkaras (as the founders of various *tīrthas* or sects), opposition of caste system, rejection of the superiority of the Brāhmaṇas and above all organisation of the like-minded renouncers into a monastic order, for 'Śramaṇism is essentially asceticism which developed into monasticism.'

These features are found in greater or lesser degree in all the Śramaṇa sects of the sixth-fifth century B.C. But in the Vedic age they developed only gradually partly as a result of the internal evolution of the Vedic thought and partly due to the impact of the non-Vedic people such as the authors of the Indus culture. When in the Śāntiparvan of the *Mahābhārata* Yudhishṭhira resolves to renounce the world and discusses his resolve with his brothers, wife Draupadī and some others (Chapters vii to xxxii), he speaks only of the *nivṛtti dharma*, *tapas*, wandering, *bhikshācharyā* and living a life without family (*brahmacharya*). Further, he speaks of becoming an individual renouncer only, not of joining some order or saṅgha of renouncers. Other features of Śramaṇism are also not even alluded to by him. Therefore, it may easily be conjectured that the features of Śramaṇism not mentioned by him had either not emerged by the time these chapters of the Śāntiparvan were composed or were confined to a very small circle of the Vedic society.

However, by the age of the Buddha and Mahāvīra Śramaṇism

had become fully developed and numerous Śramaṇa religions or sects—Jaina, Buddhist, Ājīvika and others—had come into existence. Further, numerous Śramaṇa ideas had become integral part of the Vedic way of life itself (via the philosophy of the Upanishads, the institution of the four āśramas and the Purushārtha doctrine). As Professor G. C. Pande opines, the Upanishads on the one hand present a natural development of the Vedic thought and on the other 'a half turn' towards Śramaṇic asceticism. That is why Manu declared that the Vedic acts are two-fold (*pravṛttaṁ cha nivṛttaṁ cha dvividha karma Vaidikam — Manusmṛti*, XII. 88). Acts which secure the fulfilment of wishes in this world or in the next world are called *pravṛtta* and acts performed without desire for a reward preceded by the acquisition of true knowledge (*jñana-pūrva*) are declared to be *nivṛtta.*" (*Ibid.*, XII. 89). At a later date Śaṅkarāchārya also declared that the Vedic religion is two-fold—*Pravṛtti-lakshaṇa* and *Nivṛtti-lakshaṇa*. We have discussed all these developments in the present monograph covering the period upto c. 300 B.C. In the post-300 B.C. period Śramaṇic thought-currents influenced the Brāhmaṇical religious sects in several other ways which we hope to discuss in a separate volume.

In the preparation of the present volume I have received ungrudging help from Professor P. K. Agrawala of the Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, and Professor Mahesh Vikram Singh of the Kashi Vidyapeetha, Varanasi. They sent me books and material from journals which were not easily available to me at Jodhpur.

I am also grateful to my wife Mrs. Kusum Lata, son Dr. Shankar Goyal, M.A., Ph. D., D. Litt. and grand-daughter Km. Meghna Goyal for the help they gave whenever and in whatever form it was needed by me.

S.R.G.

Dīpāvalī
October, 21, 2006

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Abbreviations

ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona
Ait. Brā.	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
Ait. Upa.	Aitareya Upanishad
AIU	The Age of Imperial Unity, ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker
ĀMMK	Ārya Mañjuśrī Mūla Kalpa
AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya
AV	Atharvaveda
BEFEO	Bulletin de L 'Ecole Francaise D'Extreme Orient, Saigon
Bṛ. Upa.	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Stuides, London
CA	The Classical Age, ed. by R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalker
CHI	The Cultural Heritage of India, 4 Vols.
Chh. Upa.	Chhāndogya Upanishad
Dh.	Dhammapada
EI	Epigraphia Indica, Delhi
EHI	Early History of India, by V. A. Smith
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
HD	History of Dharmaśāstra, 5 Vols., by P. V. Kane
HIB	A History of Indian Buddhism, by S.R. Goyal
HIL	A History of Indian Literature, by M. Winternitz
IA	Indian Antiquary, Bombay
IC	Indian Culture, Calcutta
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta
JA	Journal Asiatique, Paris
JAHRS	Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society, Rajahmundry
JAIH	Journal of Ancient Indian History, Calcutta
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society, New Haven
JASB	Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta
JBORS	Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna

JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay
JIH	Journal of Indian History, Trivandrum
JNSI	Journal of the Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi
Kh.	Khandha
Kh. N.	Khuddaka Nikāya
Kv.	Kathāvatthu
Life	The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang, by S. Beal
Lv.	Lalitavistara
Mbh.	Mahābhārata
MBT	Minor Buddhist Texts, 2 Pts., ed. by G. Tucci
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
MP	Milinda Pañho
MSS	Mahāyāna Sūtra Saṁgraha, Vol. I, ed. by P. L. Vaidya
Mvg.	Mahāvagga
Mvu.	Mahāvastu
Origins	Studies in the Origins of Buddhism, by G.C. Pande
PHAI	Political History of Ancient India, by H. C. Raychaudhuri
PIHC	Proceedings of the Indian History Congress
PJ	Prāchī Jyoti, Kurukshetra
POC	Proceedings of the Oriental Conference
PTS	Pali Text Society
Rāmā.	Rāmāyaṇa
Record	A Record of the Buddhistic Religion as Practised in India and Malaya Archipelago (A.D. 671-695), by I-tsing
Records	Buddhist Records of the Western World, by S. Beal
RHAI	A Religious History of Ancient India, Volume One, by S. R. Goyal
RPV	The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads, 2 Vols., by A. B. Keith
RV	Ṛgveda
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
SBE	Sacred Books of the East
SN	Saṁyutta Nikāya
TĀ	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka
TB	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
Travels	On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India (A Translation of Yuan Chwang's Hsi-Yü-Chi), by T. Watters
Upa.	Upanishad
Vm.	Visuddhimaggo
Vin.	Vinaya Piṭaka
YV	Yajurveda

Chapter 1

Meaning and Nature of Śramaṇism

Meaning and Nature of Śramaṇism

Śramaṇism was an integral part of ancient Indian religious life and Śramaṇa sects and religions had become an important part of Indian religious tradition by the sixth-fifth century B.C.—almost as important as the Vedic or Brāhmaṇical religion, if not more. But the origin and early growth of some features of Śramaṇism can be traced back more than two millennia before Christ, though it is rather difficult to be sure whether or not Śramaṇism had a pre-Vedic and non-Vedic origin. The difficulty in answering this question arises from the facts that many features of Śramaṇism are found in the earliest strata of the Vedic literature and the nature and components of Śramaṇism continued to change and transform in the course of its growth and development.

The term *Śramaṇa* became popular with Buddhism and Jainism though the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* uses it to denote a particular class of sages.[1] In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* it is used with the term *Tāpasa*.[2] Gradually it become a general term for the monks of the various heterodox sects. The *Dīgha Nikāya*, the *Indica* of Megasthenes and the inscriptions of Aśoka indicate (cf. Ch.10) that the heterodox sects claimed for the Śramaṇas equality of status with the Brāhmaṇas.

Let us start our enquiry of ancient Indian Śramaṇism with the characterstics of Śramaṇa sects of the age of the Mahāvīra and Buddha and then try to find out, if we can, since when these characterstics are traceable in our sources—linguistic, literary and archaeological.

Of the Śramaṇa sects of the sixth-fifth centuries B.C., Buddhism and Jainism occupy the foremost rank. Alongwith them there were other sects which have left no independent literary documents. They are frequently criticised by the Buddha and Mahāvīra

1. *TĀ*, II. 7 (*Vātaraśanā ha vā ṛshayaḥ śramaṇī ūrdhvamanthino babhūvuḥ*).
2. *Bṛ. Upa.*, IV. 3.22.

in their discourses. These discourses do not always represent their best side; probably they do not always represent even the correct picture of their doctrines. The common features of all these sects seem to have been the following :

1. The Śramaṇas generally believed in the nivṛtti (other-worldly) ideal as opposed to the pravṛtti (this-worldly) ideal of the Vedic Brāhmaṇical society. Consequently they observed a set of different ethical norms.
2. The Śramaṇas were traditionally wanderers. Indeed wandering constituted an important part of their discipline.
3. Besides wandering, the Śramaṇa sects believed in *tapas* or physical austerities and *brahmacharya* (celebacy).
4. They observed the practice of begging of food (*bhikshāchryā*).
5. The Śramaṇas organised themselves into monastic orders (*saṅgha*) which revolved round a preceptor usually called Arhat or Tīrthaṅkara. Usually a set of more liberal rules were prescribed for the laity.
6. As against the Brāhmaṇical system, they could take to a life of renunciation any time after crossing the age of minority without fulfilling their social and domestic obligations.
7. Śramaṇa sects usually believed in the Saṁsāravāda (theory of transmigration) and Karmavāda (theory of karma) and practised a detached life with a view to liberating themselves from the bondage of the world. They did not regard ritual and sacrifices as essential for human well-being or for their final liberation.
8. They did not believe in caste system, denied the superiority of the Brāhmaṇas as a caste and admitted into their gaṇa or saṅgha, at least theoretically, everybody irrespective of his caste, gender and āśrama.
9. They generally denied that there existed an all-powerful god or that the universe was created by him. And lastly;
10. They challenged the authority of the Vedas as divinely revealed texts.

All these characterstics of Śramaṇism are found in greater or lesser degree in almost all the Śramaṇa sects of the age of Mahāvīra and the Buddha, though emphasis given on each of them differed from sect to sect. Their attitude to the concepts of transmigration and karmavāda was also not always similar. They differed on these questions from the Brāhmaṇa thinkers and also with each other.

Śramaṇism and Nivṛtti Ideal

An intertwining of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti ideals seems to have been a feature of Indian religious tradition from the very beginning. Writing some time in the pre-Christian era the author of the *Manu-smṛti* observed : *pravṛttaṁ cha nivṛttaṁ cha dvividha karma Vaidikam.* (XII. 88). Later on in the Introduction to his commentary on the *Gītā*, Śaṅkarāchārya also observed that the Vedic religion is two-fold—Pravṛtti dharma and Nivṛtti dharma (*Dvividho hi Vedokto dharmaḥ pravṛtti-lakshaṇo nivṛtti-lakshaṇaḥ cha*).[1] Scholars like Jacobi and Oldenberg basically accept this thesis and attribute the rise of the Nivṛtti dharma (gnostic and ascetic tradition) to a reformist school within the Vedic tradition and regard Buddhism and Jainism as continuations of this reformist tendency. Some others such as S.K. Chatterji and R.P. Chanda believe that the two tendencies may be attributed to different ethnic traditions—Aryan and non-Aryan, the ascetic tradition being the contribution of the latter. Some other historians feel that the ascetic movement arose as a result of the break up of tribal economy and other socio-economic changes which were concomitant with the Second Urban Revolution.[2] According to G.C. Pande, however, it would not be correct to think of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti as belonging to two different ethnic and historic strata. Even in the Indus Civilization, he argues, one can discern both these tendencies—Pravṛtti dharma in the worship of Mother-Goddess and fertility cult and Nivṛtti dharma in the worship of Paśupati and Yogic tradition. However, he also admits that the Vedic religion was 'in the beginning essentially Pravṛtti dharma but later on partly through its own inner evolution and more through the influence of the Muni Śramaṇas it developed Nivṛtti dharma as a tendency within its fold.'[3]

Śramaṇism as a Tradition of Wanderers

According to V.S. Pathak, like the Greek *telos* and the Vedic *charaṇa*, the Śramaṇas originally belonged to a tradition of wanderers.[4] After a study of the cognate words in Indo-European languages, he has come to the conclusion that the primary meaning of Śramaṇa, Samana, is a wanderer, a peripatetic, and that the wandering or peripatos was

1. *Gītā*, Śaṅkara's Comm., Gita Press edn., p. 1.

2. For references see Pande, G.C., *Śramaṇa Tradition : Its History and Contribution to Indian Culture*, Ahmedabad, 1978, pp. 4-5.

3. Pande, G.C., *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism* (henceforth *Origins*), Allahabad, 1957, p. 261.

4. Cf. Pathak, V.S., his Preface in S.R. Goyal's *A History of Indian Buddhism*, Meerut, 1987, pp. xiii-xxiii.

regarded as a religious practice and that *śramaṇa* practice was current in the proto-Vedic period. Like the Śramaṇa the Vedic Charaṇa, from the root *char*, to move, was also originally an organization of the Vedic wanderers. But unlike the Śramaṇa the Vedic Charaṇas were devoted to various gods, whom they invoked and to whom they offered oblations.Thus, the primary meaning of Charaṇa was a group of wanderers from which the secondary connotation of persons moving and dwelling together i.e., establishing temporary colonies, devoted to various gods, developed. Thus, in the *RV* a supplicant desires to have an accomodation in the divine Charaṇa, in the heavenly enclosure where the king Vaivasvata rules. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* after the completion of the *Samishṭha-Yajush* sacrifice, the invited gods are dismissed to their respective Charaṇas—*Vyavasrijati yatra yatra yeshām charaṇam.*[1] Again, in the same work it is stated that the Charaṇa of Rudra is beyond the Mūjavat mountain.

Then, charaṇa also expresses the specific manner of performing rites of devotion and sacrifice to the deities. These religious practices were transmitted and remembered through generations. And lastly, the charaṇas were transformed in the Vedic assemblies, where different recensions of the Vedas were studied and taught. Like Sanskrit *char* the Greek word *telos* also originally indicated the early Greek organization of wanderers. Initiation rite was performed for admission. And like charaṇa it eventually became a group of priests with their social and mystic, rites.[2]

Tapas (Austerities) as a Feature of Śramaṇism

An essential feature of Śramaṇism was *tapas*, that is austerities. It was unknown to Ṛgvedic religion though it was gradually imbibed from the non-vedic sources by the later Brāhmaṇism.[3] Tapas was different from *Yajña* in that by the latter were attained worldly success, wealth, children and heaven while the former helped in obtaining mystic superhuman faculties. Later, the gods were also supposed to perform *tapas* as they were expected to offer sacrifices.[4] At several places in the *Atharvaveda śrama* occurs along with *tapas*. Moreover, in the various sects from the Ājīvikas to Buddhists,

1. Even now after the recitation of a *kathā* gods are requested to retire to their respective abodes.

2. Pathak, *op.cit.*, p. xv.

3. Cf. Jain, Bhagchandra, 'Antiquity of *Śramaṇa* Cult', *World Buddhism*, XV, No. I, pp. 3 ff.; also 'Asceticism' in *ERE*, Vol. II.

4. Chakraborty, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1973, p. 9, n. 18.

austerities were accepted in varying measures as the core conduct of discipline, indicating thereby that they formed a part of the primitive Śramaṇa tradition. The word *tapas* indicates self-discipline through bodily torture. Tapas in this sense may not be confused with tapas meaning heat. It has two different meanings derived from two different roots.[1]

There is hardly any evidence of asceticism or physical mortification as a religious practice in the *Ṛgveda*. However, in the *Atharvaveda*, it was recognized as a path of spiritual realization. In the primitive Śramaṇa tradition asceticism or *tapa* was, of course, an important element.

Brahmacharya and Bhikshācharyā as Features of Śramaṇa Discipline

Positively speaking the primitive Śramaṇa tradition was also characterised by *brahmacharya* (*brahmachariya*). At least this may be asserted with some confidence that *brahmacharya* was the most essential and integral part of the Śramaṇa discipline. In the Pali literature, *brahmachariya* is mentioned almost as a synonym of *Sāmanya* or the essence of *Samana*.[2] Expressing the attainment of the Śramaṇa status, a verse frequently occurs in the Nikāyas which means : "The birth is eliminated, the discipline of brahmachariya is successfully completed. There is nothing beyond."

Again, criticising the false doctrines, it is argued that if they are accepted as true, we would be compelled to accept the absurd position that Śrāmaṇya can be obtained even without *brahmachariya*. Rhys Davids, and following him B.M. Barua, even held the view that "the order of *Śramaṇas* or *bhikkhus* originated from brahmachārins." Though like the Brāhmaṇas, the Śrāmaṇas observed the practice of begging the food (*bhikshācharyā*), yet in the Śramaṇa tradition brahmacharya had a quite different connotation. In the beginning among the Brāhmaṇas the term 'brahmacharya' meant the observance of certain rules requisite for the study of the Vedas and the one who studied them near a teacher was called brahmachārin. The first stage of human life thus attained the name of Brahmacharyāśrama. But in the Upanishadic age, Brahman came to mean the Ultimate Truth. Therefore, now brahmacharya came to signify living a particular system of life conducive to the attainment of the highest truth.[3] In the Śramaṇa tradition also the term

1. Pathak, *op. cit.*, p. xvii.
2. *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
3. Cf. Pande, G.C., *Origins*, p.331.

brahmachariya was identified with the way of life leading to the Ultimate Truth. Thus, while the original meaning of the term was expressive of an *āśrama*, the new meaning denoted the spiritual exertion and training of anyone coming from any class or caste in the context of the ascetic code. It is generally in the latter sense that it is used in the Buddhist literature. The life that a śramaṇa seeker of the truth had to lead in this stage was naturally not an easy-going one. It involved difficulties regarding his food, clothing, shelter, etc. which led to the belief that self-mortification and severe austerities were the only source of emancipation. Devadatta's demand to introduce more strict rules in the Buddhist saṅgha might have been motivated by a genuine feeling occasioned by the general atmosphere around him in the midst of which the Buddhist monastic rules appeared very worldly and relaxed.[1] The Jainas, viewing from their own standpoint, accused the Buddhists of a luxurious living because the Buddhist doctrine of the 'Middle Way' tended to minimize the hardships involved in brahmachariya.

Here a reference may be made to the Brahmachārī cult of the *RV*. According to R.N. Dandekar,[2] it had close affinity with Rudra and phallus worship. They are mentioned in the Brahmachārī Sūkta of the *AV* (XI.5). The views that the Sūkta refers to the Vedic student or Brahman or sun have been challenged by Dandekar. According to him, the object of the Sūkta is the glorification of a cult which was known as the Brahmachārī cult. Its members followed a life of rigorous discipline, clothed themselves with heat (*gharma*), stood up with fervour (*tapas*)[3] and acquired special virile powers. Many of their features remind one of the Rudra-Śiva cult. For example, the Brahmachārī is described as being followed by the Gandharvas (XI.5.2) whose association with Rudra-Śiva is well-known (cf. the Keśī-Sūkta of the *RV*). The most striking evidence in this connection is the description of the Brahmachārī as the possessor of great penis (*bṛhachchhepa*) and the sprinkler of the seed (*retaḥ sinchati*). It makes it quite clear that his cult was a part of the culture complex to which the Rudra and Liṅga worship belonged.

From the above discussion it is quite obvious that in the Middle Vedic Age, that is in the age of the Later Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas, Liṅga worship became comparatively more popular and despite its

1. Mishra, G.S.P., *The Age of Vinaya*, New Delhi, 1972, p. 40.

2. Dandekar, R.N., *Rudra in the Veda*, Poona, 1953, pp. 6-7.

3. Cf. the description of the Indian ascetics as seen by Alexander's historians (*infra*, Ch. 10).

non-Vedic origin began to claim increasingly greater recognition among the Vedic Aryans themselves. The Ṛgvedic *ṛshis* prayed (*RV*, VII.21.5), 'let not the 'Śiśnadevāḥ enter our sacrificial paṇḍāla'. This and other such derogatory references to Śiśnadevāḥ are most likely to the phallic worshippers of the Indus Civilization. But gradually alongwith the transformation of the personality of Rudra, ideas concerning phallic worship found entry in the Vedic religion. The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (II.7) refers to Vātaraśana sages who were Śramaṇas and Ūrdhvamanthīs. According to Sāyaṇa, the term Ūrdhvamanthī means Ūrdhvaretas i.e. 'one whose semen goes up'. It obviously indicates their claim of control over sexual passions and reminds one of the description of the Vrātyas in the *Pañchaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa* as *samanīchameḍhra* (one whose penis hangs low through control of passion) and of the Brahmachārīs as *bṛhachchhepa* (possessors of great penis).

The increasing popularity of the Liṅga worship in the Vedic age is indicated by some other passages of the *AV*. At one place (X.8) it describes the Skambha as co-extensive with the universe and comprehends in him the various parts of the material universe and also the abstract qualities. In this connection it is said that He who knows 'the golden reed (*vetas*) is the mysterious Prajāpati'. Significantly, the word *vetas* used here in the sense of reed has been used in the sense of membrum virile in the *RV* (X.95.4-5) and the *ŚB*. According to Rao,[1] "It is the same Skambha that has given birth to the story of Śiva's appearance as a blazing fire between Brahmā and Vishṇu when they were quarrelling about the superiority of one over the other." There are also many phallic ideas and rites depicted in the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā, Taittirīya Saṁhitā, Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. In the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* (4.11.5.2) Rudra is described as the Lord of Yonīs thus indicating his close association with the worship of Yonī, and indirectly with the worship of Liṅga.

Concepts of Tīrtha and Tīrthaṅkara

In contrast to the theocentric telos and *charaṇa*, the Śramaṇa organization revolved round the preceptor called *Arhata* and *Tīrthaṅkara*. In the *Ṛgveda*, *arhan* in general connotes the idea of worshipful, venerable, but in particular it denotes Agni as the prototype of human priest, who officiates at the worship of the gods. In the Pali and Ardhamāgadhī, *arhata* is an enlightened being, a spiritual

1. Rao, T.A.G., *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, II, i, Madras, 1914, p. 571.

teacher analogous to a prophet. According to Buddhaghosha, "*arhatahood* consists in the destruction of the spokes of world wheel." Likewise, in the *Dhavalā-ṭīkā arhata* is explained as *ari-hananād.* "On account of destroying the spiritual enemies in the form of blemishes", *arihanta* is so called. This in itself is historically significant.

The concept of *tīrthaṅkara* is also of remote antiquity. *Tīrtha* originally meant a ford or a bridge. According to V.S. Pathak, the concept of tīrthaṅkara is a non-Ṛgvedic and pre-Ṛgvedic concept. Since it is found in the majority of the Śramaṇa sects, it might have been a part of the primitive Śramaṇa tradition. In the Śramaṇa tradition *arhata-tīrthaṅkara* singly enjoys the high status which is shared together by the priests and gods in the Vedic *charaṇas.* The Vedic priest leads the *yajamāna* to the god. The *arhata-tīrthaṅkara* leads the seeker to himself or to his own teachings. It is almost a blind alley which stops at the *arhata-tīrthaṅkara* who through his teaching ensures the progress of his follower in his journey beyond the miserable world. In the Vedic fold, it is only in the Upanishads that the importance of *guru* is accepted, but there too he occupies the pedestal with God—*yathā deve tathā gurau.*[1]

Monasticism

Śramaṇism is essentially asceticism which developed into monasticism. In the early period most of the renouncers 'left' society as individuals. Many characters of the *Mahābhārata* such a Vidura and Dhṛtarāshṭra, numerous thinkers of the Upanishads, some sensitive souls like Buddha and Mahāvīra (before they established their own orders) and the Sarmanes and Brachmanes described by the historians of Alexander (who did not belong to any particular sect) were all individual renouncers. Thus, the terms Śramaṇa and the like denoted an individual who opted out of society, renounced social responsibilities and put himself in isolation. Such a person took upon himself the goal of discovering and becoming identified with the ultimate reality by resorting to austerity (*tapas*) and meditation (*dhyāna*). An individual renouncer who thus isolates himself totally is lost to society and other ascetics.

But the *parivrājakas* and *śramaṇas* of the Upanishads and later periods had, for various reasons, to identify themselves as groups rather than move about singly as individual wanderers. The social trends in the mid-first millennium B.C. were not always helpful to wanderers. They were often seen as people escaping social

1. Pathak, *op. cit.*, p. xx.

responsibilities. In such a situation individual renouncers could confront their critics as members of a sect and its leader could act as a powerful head of such a sect. The social ineffectiveness of the actions of individuals was made obvious by the effectiveness of the group. But in order to be effective as a group a physical habitation for it was necessary. This led to the evolution of the monasteries. The evolution of monasteries began with the need for a permanent residence during the rainy season when mendicancy was difficult. Such residences gradually acquired stability in the form of *ārāma*, a park endowed by an individual to the saṅgha, such as the Ambavana of Jīvaka at Rājagṛha. Ultimately the settlements of *bhikshus* expanded into *vihāras* or regular monastic complexes.

In the Buddhist saṅgha, the general assembly of monks was the supreme authority and even its head had to accept its decision. Every ordained monk was a member of the saṅgha and all monks living within the jurisdiction of a particular monastery had to be present at the *uposathā* assembly. Onwership of property vested with the saṅgha and never with the individual monk. The monastery was not the place for those seeking absolute freedom. For them asceticism in isolation was preferable.[1] The monastery provided an alternative only to those who opted out of social obligations but were willing to abide by the discipline of the monastic life.

In the Later Vedic literature terms such as *tapasvī, śramaṇa, saṅnyāsin, parivrājaka, yogī*, etc. occur more commonly. They are suggestive of renunciation, or casting aside one's social obligations, of the taking on a life of austerity, and above all of wandering from place to place. The term *parivrājaka* is also often applied to young men who, having finished their education took to a life of wandering for a brief period before becoming householders. They were different from parivrājakas wandering in groups under the direction of a teacher or others loosely affiliated to some sect. Many wanderers lived on the outskirts of towns while those of a markedly ascetic disposition retired to places more isolated. Some Brāhmaṇa ascetics were sedentary, often living in hermitages sometimes with their families, although claiming to conform to celibacy all the same. These came to be called Vaikhānasas.[2] Brāhmaṇa orthodoxy was not sympathetic to city-dwellers and restrictions were placed on snātakas visiting cities. The wanderers were often the dissidents. "The questioning of the orthodox tradition had started prior to this period, but what was

1. Thapar, R., *Ancient Indian Social History*, Hyderabad, 1978, p. 87.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

new was the emergence of various sects such as the Nirgranthas, the Ājīvikas and later the Buddhists, not to mention various Cārvāka sects as well. The dissidence of these groups was, however, qualitatively different since they were not individual dissenters but had organized their dissent into sects."[1] Whereas the individual ascetics were figures of loneliness working out their salvation each one for himself, the Śramaṇa sects were concerned about other people and this concern was expressed in their desire to lead others along the path which they had found. Inherent in this social concern was the realization of the importance for the search for truth which required a guide, Arhata or Tīrthaṅkara.

Challenge to the Authority of the Vedas and the Idea of God

Indian philosophy is usually divided between the 'orthodox' and 'unorthodox' schools. This distinction is drawn in terms of their acceptance or non-acceptance of the authority of the Vedas. In philosophy it means that "the Vedas contain the ultimate philosophical truth, and that the test of the truth of a philosophical position is whether or not it is in accordance with what is written in the Vedas."[2] But on the question of what constitutes the Vedas different religious and philosophical schools differ radically. The authoritative Vedas themselves were originally thought to be only three in number (*Trayī*). Later, the authority of the *Atharvaveda*, the fourth Veda, began to be accepted. In any case, the Vedas were always held to be plural in number. "Moreover, their authority was not equally or securely establishsed even in the Vedic age. Further, on the most conservative estimate, it took them at least a thousand years to assume their present form. It is obvious that during this time their authority was never such as to preclude the possibility of making furter additions to them. This proves that at that time their authority could not have been absolute. In later ages even among those who believed in their authority, there was always a difference of opinion regarding the portion of the Vedas which was to be regarded as authoritative, and regarding which subject matter, and for what purpose. The Mīmāṁsā, for example, does not only deny the Upaniṣads the privilege of being counted among the corpus of Vedic authority, but also contends that any utterance which is not a pure injunction, that is, either a command or a prohibition, is not to be considered as Veda."[3] The Vedāntins, on the other hand, recognize the authority of

1. *Ibid.*
2. Daya Krishna, *Indian Philosophy—A Counter Perspective*, Delhi, 1996, p. 8.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

the Upanishads, but not of the Upanishads alone. They also recognize the authority of the *Gītā* and the *Brahma-sūtra*, which are definitely not regarded as a part of the Vedas by anybody. Equally, they give scant recognition to the authority of the non-Upanishadic portion of the Vedas. Thus, for Vedānta as well as for Mīmāṁsā, the term Veda is restricted not only to certain portions of the classical Vedic literature, but also to some of the their contents or subject-matter. The Vedas, in this way, enjoy only a very circumscribed authority, even for Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta.[1] No wonder if the Śramaṇa sects did not subscribe to the *apaurusheyatva* of the Vedas.

The Buddhists as well as the Jainas have attacked the authoritativeness of the Vedas in many other ways. They argue that the Vedas refer to particular persons and places and hence could not be prior to these. They sometimes also preach obviously faulty dictrines and hence cannot be regarded as authoritative. The human authorship of the Vedas may be clearly deduced from the fact that they speak of passions, violence and falsehood. The argument that the Vedas have no author because none is remembered proves precisely nothing except the failure of the memory of the person giving this argument. If someone fails to remember something it does not follow that that something did not exist. The Vedas themselves speak of their human authors. The various Vedic recensions are thus ascribed to different sages like Kaṇve etc. Obviously they are human compositions like other compositions.

The doctrine of the *apaurusheyatva* of the Vedas rests on the assumption that they are texts revealed by God. But the Jainas and the Buddhists oppose the doctrine of theism as much as the authenticity of the Vedas. They not only argue for a personal authorship of the Vedas but also deny their authority. They seem to hold that "Religious faith requires an authentic revelation but that does not need to be identified with the Vedas. Nor is it necessary that the revelation should proceed from the creator of the universe. To be authentic the revelation should come from a person who is fully knowledgeable about spiritual matters and is free from all motivation except that of compassion and helpfulness towards suffering humanity." The Buddhists and the Jainas thus accept omniscient human teachers as the source of their religious scriptures and do not feel the need of accepting the existence of God for that purpose. It is thus clear that the atheism of the Śramaṇa sects relates only to the

1. *Ibid.*

idea of a personal creator of the world not to the idea of a religious saviour. The Buddha and the Jina are in one sense hardly to be distinguished from God. They are omniscient as also the saviours of mankind and are in this sense exactly like God in His aspect of grace. Therefore, it may be held that "Śramaṇic atheism is not a variety of irreligion but of religion. It faces the evil and suffering of life squarely and attributes it to human failings rather than to the mysterious design of an unknown being. It stresses the inexorableness of the moral law. No prayers and worship are of any avail against the force of *Karman.* It emphasizes self-reliance in the quest for salvation. Man needs to improve himself by a patient training of the will and the purification of feelings. Such purification leads to an inward illumination of which the power is innate in the soul or the mind. This is quite different from the Vedic view where illumination comes from outside, either from an eternally revealed word or from the grace of God. Śramaṇism represents a sterner variety of religion where the consolation of a personal God is replaced by the guidance of a spiritual teacher which must be practised by the individual himself on the basis of his own resources."[1]

1. Pande, G.C., *Śramaṇa Tradition,* p. 73.

Chapter 2

Śramaṇic Elements in the Vedic Tradition

Heterogenous Character of the Vedic Society

Though the Vedic or Brāhmaṇical religion was this-worldly (*pravṛtti mārgī*) in nature, in which the worshipper sought to propitiate the gods by performing sacrifices of various types with the help of priests, yet it should not be presumed that the entire Vedic society believed in the cult of sacrifice. Firstly, in the *RV* there are references to people and groups who were opposed to the ritualistic religion of the Vedic Aryans. *RV* XI.12.5 mentions people who believed neither in the existence of Indra and nor in heaven. In *RV* VIII. 103.3 Agni is invoked to help the sacrificer with animals and other types of wealth as such things were often stolen away by the non-believers. In *RV* VIII.104.24 Indra is prayed to help the sacrificer against his harassers who included males and females both. In some verses the oppressors of the ritualists are called Yātudhānas and Yātudhānīs. According to Sāyaṇa, the term Yātudhāna means 'he who causes *yātanā* or *pīḍā* '. In several verses various gods are invoked to crush them. In some verses the harassers of the ritualists are called Rakshasas and Indra, Agni, Soma, or some other god is invoked to drive them out from the venue of the ritual and for destroying them. The Rakshasas were divided into different tribes or groups[1] and their banners were marked with the representations of dog, owl, eagle, vulture, etc. They surrounded the ritualists, desecrated their rituals and even murdered them. The epic legends of the harassment caused to Viśvāmitra and other ṛshis by the Rākshasas (Rakshasas of the *RV*) and Rāma's or some other king's endeavour to make them free of this menace were based on the actual experience of the Vedic ṛshis.

It is also not beyond the bounds of possibility that some of the harassers of the ritualists were Aryans themseves. According to the *RV* I.22.5, some of them were of reddish complexion (*pishaṅgabhṛshṭi*) though of evil nature. As pointed out by R.K. Bhattacharya, they most likely belonged to the Aryan community

1. *RV*, VIII.104.22.

itself.[1]

The Vedic literature refers to people who worshipped images (*mūradevāḥ*) or symbols of gods. Such persons could not have been whole-hearted supporters of the hieratic religion. The *AV* has preserved the picture of the superstitions and beliefs of the common man which were accepted as a part of the Vedic tradition only grudgingly and at a later date. It proves that the Ṛgvedic ritualistic religion did not enjoy undisputed monoply even amongst the Aryans.

But the Indian society of the Early and Middle Vedic Periods was even more heterogeneous than is indicated by the facts mentioned above. The Aryans entered India in waves at different times. Therefore, they themselves could not have been a compact group. It is just possible that the different waves of the Aryans which entered India belonged to different cultural traditions, as was the case in Greece. There, the early wave of the Indo-Europeans, known as the Achaean, defeated the authors of the Cretan Civilization but readily adopted the material culture of the vanquished. But the later wave of the Indo-Europeans, known as the Dorian, was more destructive and less amenable to cultural adaptation; it, therefore, destroyed the Mycaeanean Civilization created by the Achaeans but did not itself adopt it.[2] A similar situation might have arisen in India; the possibility that the authors of the Lothal and Kalibangan (where figurines of mother-goddess and stone liṅgas are absent but fire altars are found) were a wave of the non-Ṛgvedic Aryans cannot be ruled out. Probably they adopted the material culture of the Indus people minus its religion while the Ṛgvedic Aryans refused to adopt the urban ways of life altogether. Here, one is instantly reminded of the well-known theory regarding the Inner and Outer Bands of the Indo-Aryan people.[3]

Then there were non-Aryans whom Aryans came into contact with. They belonged to different cultural traditions and various degrees of cultural development. There were on the one hand authors of the highly developed urban Indus Civilization (or their descendants) and, on the other, a large number of primitive tribes living in forests, mountains and plains. Thus, the structure of the Indian society in the Early and Middle Vedic Age must have been quite complex. This complexity is reflected in the religious ideas of the period. The Vedic

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1. Bhattacharya, R.K., 'Opposition to Rituals in the Ṛgveda', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1972, p. 11.

2. Botsford and Robinson, *Hellenic History*, New York, 1956, pp. 11, 31.

3. Chanda, R.P., *The Indo-Aryan Races*, Rajshahi, 1916, Ch. II.

literature itself, which is mainly concerned with the hieratic religious tradition (and only partly with the religious beliefs of the masses), proves the growing impact of the non-'Vedic' religious ideas on the society of the Early and Middle Vedic Age. It was as a result of the fusion of all these Vedic and non-Vedic ideas that the Later Vedic or Upanishadic and the various post-Vedic religious ideologies evolved, their similarities and dissimilarities being largely the result of the degree of emphasis given on or hostility shown to the various shades of ideas of the Vedic and non-Vedic thought-currents.

'Frontier' Nature of the Vedic Civilization

The migration of the Aryans into India in the form of tribal waves imparted to their civilization the character of a 'frontier' civilization. In the early period the Aryans were settled in the north-west of India. Their geographical horizon extended from Kubhā in the west to the Gaṅgā in the east. Later on the Kuru-Pañchāla region in western U.P. became the chief centre of the Aryan orthodoxy. Still later the Aryans crossed the Sadānīrā (Gandak) and advanced from Kosala to Videha. Even in the sixth century B.C. Magadha in Bihar was looked down upon as impure and the Lichchhavis of north Bihar were described as Vrātyas. In the south the Aryans only gradually expanded towards the Vindhyas and beyond. Thus, during the whole of the Vedic age the Aryans were constantly on the move. That is why their polity was characterized by *jana* states, that is tribal monarchies, rather than *janapadas* or territorial states which came into being only towards the close of the Vedic age. Thus, the Vedic society, like the American society of eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was an expanding pioneering society exhibiting some of the characteristics of a frontier civilization so lucidly described by Laski,[1] —with "its sense of insecurity and robust optimism, its premium on 'success' and its reliance on religion as means unto that. Under such circumstances priests and warrior kings were naturally in the fore and led society."[2] But the migrations of the Vedic tribes also produced another type of leaders whom we may call, using the terminology of Robert Park, the marginal men of the Vedic age.[3] It were they who were indeed responsible for the fusion of the Aryan and non-Aryan elements. Their type, however, needs some elucidation.

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1. Laski, H.J., *The American Democracy*, Chs. I-II.
2. Pande, G.C., *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 264.
3. Park, Robert, 'Human Migrations and Marginal Man', *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XXXIII.

Human Migrations and Role of 'Marginal Man'

As a factor of social change migrations are obviously different from peaceful penetration, wars and revolutions. Their role in ancient human history was far more important than it is today. In ancient times migrations usually started with pushing and pressing of a whole or nearly a whole tribe (or a group of tribes) and ended with a fusion of the migrating people with the people of the land to which they migrated. It involved not only a change in the habitat of the migrating tribe and some changes in the customs and mores of the migrating tribe and the native people both, but also the emergence of a changed type of personality which it produced. It led to the breaking down of traditional organisation of the two societies and the emancipation of individual man. Energies that were formerly controlled by custom and tradition were released. The individual was freed from social restraints and constraints to which he had been subject. He experienced a release from conventional modes of thought and usually gave evidence of this release in aggressive self-assertion.[1] Inevitably, however, this release was followed, in course of time, by the re-integration of the individual in the new social order. In a certain sense and to a certain degree he became a cosmopolitan person. He learnt to look upon the world in which he was born and bred with something of the detachment of a stranger. Simmel has described the position of such a stranger in the community in terms of movement and migration. According to him,[2] such a stranger presented in his personality the specifications of a wanderer and settled resident both; he stayed but was not settled. That means he was not bound, as others were, by local conventions. And despite all this he was not ready to break with his past. He was a cultural hybrid—a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct people, never quite willing to break with the past and never quite accepted. He was a 'marginal' man—a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies which had by that time not completely fused together. He was usually, though not necessarily, a man of mixed blood. He lived in two worlds in both of which he was, in smaller or greater degree, a stranger. The conflict of culture as it took place in his mind was the conflict of his divided self—the old self and the new. It is true that such a crisis may occur in the life of every individual and does occur even in modern times in the lives of those who settle down in foreign countries, and to some extent in the lives

1. Teggart, J.F., *Theory of History*, p. 196.
2. Quoted by Robert Park, *op. cit.*

of those who settle down in the different cultural zones of their own country such as India, but in the case of the 'marginal' man produced by ancient migrations such a crisis was relatively permanent and took place in the life of a large number of individuals with the result that marginal man became a personality type which lasted for several generations.

'Margial Man' of the Vedic Age

The religious ideas of the Middle Vedic Age were not only the natural evolution of the Ṛgvedic, Atharvavedic and non-Aryan thought currents but were also the result of the fusion of the various ideologies including the ideology of the Śramaṇas which found expression in the minds of those who stood on the boundary line of various religious traditions. As we will see below, these people usually belonged to more than one religious *milieu* and more often than not found themselves in a sort of dilemma. There were non-Aryans who were attracted by the Aryan religious ideas but could not cut themselves off from their past. Similarly, there were Aryans who were inclined to accept the elements of non-Aryan religions or were impressed by the thinking of non-Vedic Aryan traditions but were proud of their Vedic heritage also. Such people were the product of the migrations of Aryan tribes (and also of the non-Aryan tribes which were forced by the Aryans to move onwards) and were part of and yet strangers to both the cultural worlds—to which they originally belonged and by which they were influenced. They, therefore, belonged to the category of 'marginal' man of Robert Park and the 'stranger' of Simmel. It was in their minds that the conflicting cultures of the age met and fused. In the lives of many this conflict of old and new cultures found expression in a moral dichotomy and inner turmoil—something which was quite natural when one set of habits and ideas was in the process of being discarded, partially or wholly, and the other one was not fully adopted.

'Marginal' man of the Vedic Age came from both the sides of the margin—Aryan and non-Aryan. On the non-Aryan side already in the Ṛgvedic Age we find references to Dāsas who had adopted some Aryan practices and gave gifts to Brāhmaṇas. The *RV* VIII.46.32 refers to a Dāsa named Balbūtha as a giver of gifts to Brāhmaṇas. The Munis of the *RV* discussed below were in a way the 'marginal' men of the Ṛgvedic period because though their tradition 'went back to the pre-Vedic pre-Aryan origins' and they were 'alien to Ṛgvedic culture',[1] yet occasionally they are called the friends of

1. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

Indra and obeisance is made to them. The *ŚB* addresses Tura Kāvasheya as a Muni[1] but *AB* informs us that his father Kavasha Ailūsha was driven out from the sacrifice on the Sarasvatī by the Brāhmaṇas with the words 'O, son of a female slave, you are a rogue and not a Brāhmaṇa'.[2] On this account they even refused to dine with him.[3] The Yatis are at several places described as enemies of Indra and at some places as friends of the Aryan Bhṛgus. Thus, they were also a category of 'marginal' men. The very collection and classification of the Vedas has been attributed to Vyāsa in whom the presence of non-Aryan blood is beyond doubt.

From the Aryan side the 'marginal' men came from diverse social groups. Firstly, there were the Vrātyas. They spoke Aryan language but did not believe in ritualistic religion. Then, there were princes like Devāpi who is said to have become degraded because he, according to Paurāṇika tradition, gave up his adherence to the Vedic religion.[4] The Aryan thinkers who adopted and popularised the worship of the Yajurvedīya and Atharvavedīya Rudra (who had imbibed a number of non-Aryan elements),[5] obviously belonged to both the cultural worlds. Same was the case of those Aryans who adopted yoga and other peculiarities of the Indus religion. They stood on the boundary line of the two worlds. The Kshatriya princes of the Upanishadic Age such as Pravāhaṇa Jaivalī of Pañchāla, Aśvapati of Kekaya, Ajātaśatru of Kāśī and Janaka of Videha and their Brāhmaṇa contemporaries such as Yājñavalkya and the people of dubious descent such as Satyakāma Jābāla, Raikva, etc. as also Yudhishṭhira of the Pāṇḍava family also stood on the margin of the two cultural traditions; for, on the one hand, they preached an other-worldly philosophy having affinities with Śramaṇic ideology which was opposed to this-worldly ritualistic religion of the Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas and on the other did not reject the authority of the earlier Brāhmaṇical texts.

The Munis

The most important group of people who stood on the boundary line of the Vedic and non-Vedic religious ideas were the Munis. They were the champions of the other-worldly or Śramaṇic ideology. The

1. *ŚB*, II, p. 1041.
2. *AB*, VIII.1.
3. Cf. Basu, *India in the Age of the Brāhmaṇas*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 30.
4. Chitrav, *Bhāratavarshīya Prāchīna Charitrakośa*, Poona, 1964, p. 300.
5. Goyal, S. R., *A Religious History of Ancient India*, I, Meerut, 1984, p. 78.

earliest literary evidence for them comes from the *RV*.[1] The word 'muni' occurs once in a hymn to the Maruts (*RV*, VII.56.8). Here it appears to mean a person in ecstasy. At another place (*RV*, VIII.3.5) Indra is said to have been the friend of the munis (*Indromuninām sakhā*). The third and the most important mention of the munis occurs in the famous Keśī-sūkta (*RV*, X. 136). It delineates for us the strange figure of the muni who is described as long-haired (*keśī*), clad in dirty, tawny-coloured garments (*piśaṅgā vasate malā*), walking in the air (*vātaraśanāḥ*)[2] or flying (*antarikṣheṇa patati*), delirious with the state of being a muni (*unmadita maunayena*) and inspired (*deveshita*). He enjoyed friendship with Vāyu (*Vāyoḥ sakhātho*) and drank poison[3] with Rudra (*keśī vishasya pātreṇa yad Rudreṇāpibat saha*). He followed the moving wind (*vātasyānu dhrājiṁ yanti*) and attained the status of god (*yaddevāso avikshata*). Mortal men (*martāso*) could only see his body (*śarīra*) and no more. He treaded the path of sylvan beasts, Gandharvas and Apsarās (*apsarasāṁ gandharvāṇāṁ mṛgāṇāṁ charaṇe charan*). Many aspects of the personality of the muni are rather obscure but it is obvious that he is described as keśī (*long-haired*) and that he used ochre-robes and had distinctive condition of ecstasy (*mauneya*). His association with the Rudra cult is also quite clear. The reference to the drinking of poison by Rudra with muni may be the germ of the later Vishapāna legend of Śiva while his association with sylvan beasts reminds one of the Paśupati aspect of this god. His description as keśī (long-haired) reminds one of the Keśīs and Jaṭilas of the sixth century B.C. both of whom belonged to the heterodox tradition.[4] Obviously, the author of the Keśī-sūkta regarded the munis as different from the Vedic ṛshis. As G.C. Pande has said, the Vedic Aryans were filled with a certain sense of wonder and awe at the sight of miracle peforming munis.[5] The shape of their ideology in this archaic period is a matter of speculation. It is however obvious and certain that they belonged to

1. Chakraborty, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, p. 9, n. 18.

2. The term *Vātaraśanāḥ* cannot indicate nudity (one having wind as his girdle) as is argued by many (cf. Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 57) since the very next words clearly refer to their clothes. Sāyaṇa interprets the term as 'sons of Vātaraśana, a sage'. According to G. C. Pande (*Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 24), the words *antarikṣheṇa patati* occurring in verse 4 seem to recapture and expand the sense of *Vātaraśanāḥ*.

3. Griffith interprets *visha* as 'water'. But the word usually means poison and this meaning is consonant with the later *Vishapāna* legend of Śiva.

4. Sāyaṇa takes the term *Keśī* in the sense of 'sun'. S. K. Dutt agrees with him.

5. Pande, *Origins*, p. 258.

the ascetic Śramaṇa ideology from which later Jainism, Buddhism, Sāṁkhya and Yoga and also some other minor systems evolved. In the age of the Buddha the leaders of this ideology were often styled as munis, śramaṇas or parivrājakas. They preached *yoga* and *dhyāna* and lived a homeless life. They did not accept the authority of the Vedas and the efficacy of sacrifical ritual, did not believe in the Vedic gods as creator and disregarded the Brāhmaṇical claim of superiority of birth. "There are five signs of the folly of those who have lost their intelligence", Dharmakīrti declared,[1] "belief in the validity of the Vedas (*Veda-prāmāṇyaṁ*), belief in the a creator (*kasyachitkartṛvādaḥ*), expecting ethical merit from ablutions (*snāne dharmechchhā*), pride of caste (*jātivādāvalepaḥ*) and engaging in violence to be rid of sin (*pāpa-hānāya santāpārambhaḥ*)." How far these ideas had developed by the Middle Vedic Age, it is difficult to say. But a continuous existence of muni tradition may easily be traced in the Vedic literature. For example, the *AV* (VII. 74.1) refers to a devamuni who acquired mysterious powers by the dint of asceticism. Similarly, the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (VI. 33.3) speaks of Aitasha, the Muni, who was regarded as deranged by his own son and whatever he said was branded as *Aitasha pralāpa*.[2] The *Pañchaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa* (X. 14.47) refers to a place called Munimaraṇa where Indra restored Vaikhānasa to life who had been killed by Asuras. The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* also speaks of Vātaraśana sages who were Śramaṇas and Ūrdhvamanthīs. According to this text, the Vātaraśana Śramaṇas led a celibate life, could disappear at will and teach to the Brāhmaṇas the way beyond sin. It also makes obeisance to the munis of Gaṅgā and Yamunā.[3]

Modern writers often use the terms *muni* and *ṛshi* as synonymous and it is indeed true that in our ancient texts also sometimes they carry the same meaning. But as a matter of fact the term muni was used for 'renouncers', who had left society and lived a life of absolute detachment. They did not have families and observed celibacy. The ṛshis, on the other hand, usually led a family-life though mostly in the forests. They usually gave birth to children and had large *āśramas* peopled by numerous disciples. They indulged in agriculture and cattle-rearing for the upkeep of the members of *āśramas*. They, that is the kulapatis or heads of these *āśramas*, even

1. Quoted by Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 52.

2. Compare it with *unmadita maunayena* of the Keśī-sūkta.

3. Cf. Pande, *Origins*, pp. 258-89. The bank of Gaṅga opposite Svargāśrama at Ṛshikeśa, Haridvāra, is still called Muni-ki-retī.

went to king to beg for maidens and material amenities for the inmates of aśramas and many of them are said to have been given maidens and large amount of gold and cows as presents. The *munis* did not hanker after such wealth and family life. That is why though ṛshis are sometimes addressed as munis, the *munis* are never called *ṛshis*.

The Yatis

Like the munis, the yatis also belonged to the non-Aryan ascetic tradition which was gradually incorporated within the Vedic fold. In some passages of the *RV* they are described as associates of the Bhṛgus and hence having good relations with Indra.[1] The *Sāmaveda* also mentions them as champions of the Bhṛgus. But in other passages they are described as hostile to Indra who threw them before the Śāla Vṛksha.[2] Like the munis they also had mystical powers. They are said to have overcome the Asuras, their foes. The *Pañchaviṁśa* (X. 14.4) and *Aitareya Brāhmaṇas* (VII.8) refer to the killing of yatis by Indra. Sāyaṇa explains yatis as *Āsurāyaḥ Prajāḥ* and parivrājakas both. According to P. V. Kane, the people of Aryan descent who led a life of meditation and mortification were called munis while persons corresponding to them among the non-Aryans were called yatis. According to D.R. Bhandarkar, however, the yatis belonged to the community of the Asuras themselves.[3] According to P. V. Kane, if there is any connection between *yati* and *yātu* (sorcery) then the yatis were probably non-Vedic sorcerers.[4]

The Jainas

While the existence of the munis and yatis in the age of the *Ṛgveda* (who believed in ascetic way of life, practised yoga and whose general view of life was other-worldly) is beyond doubt, it is rather problematical whether Jainism *as a distinct religious ideology* existed in that hoary past. According to the Jainas, twenty-three Tīrthaṅkaras had flourished before Mahāvīra (6th century B.C.), the 24th Tīrthaṅkara. The historicity of Pārśvanātha, the twenty-third Tīrthaṅkara is also generally accepted and he is placed about 250 years before Mahāvīra. The historicity of other Tīrthaṅkaras is however as yet a matter of Jaina faith only. But H. L. Jain[5] has sought to prove the historicity of Ṛshabhadeva, the first of the Tīrthaṅkaras,

1. E.g. in *RV*, VIII. 3.9, 6.8.
2. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VII. 28.1.
3. See Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
4. Kane, P. V., *History of Dharmaśāstra*, II, Poona, 1941, p. 419.
5. Quoted by Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 3.

by correlating the description found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* with the evidence of the Keśī-sūkta of the *RV*. The *Bhāgavata*[1] speaks of the royal sage Ṛshabha who became an *avadhūta* and in this context mentions the Vātaraśana Śramaṇas and uses the epithets *Keśabhūri bhāraḥ* and *Maunavrataḥ* for Ṛshabha. It reminds one of the Keśī-sūkta of the *RV* which refers to munis as *keśīs* and *vātaraśanāḥ*. According to H. L. Jain, the *RV* here refers to Ṛshabha, the first of the Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras. His contention may or may not be correct, but it does open interesting possibilities (*infra*, Ch.6 on Jaina Śramaṇism before Mahāvīra).

The Vrātyas

Another group of people belonging to the non-Aryan culture complex was that of the Vrātyas. In the *Manusmṛti* (X.20) Vrātyas are defined as the offsprings of the dvijātis or twice-born who have fallen from Sāvitrī. The *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* (I.9.16), however, says that those who are born of the mixture of varṇas are called Vrātyas. In the *Mahābhārata* the Vrātya is defined as the progency of a Śūdra man and Kshatriyā woman.[2] But despite these differences all these texts agree on one point and that is that the Vrātyas were *Sāvitrī-patita*. That is why many scholars, including P. V. Kane, derive the term 'Vrātya' from *vrata*, vow.[3] However others, including H. Shastri,[4] have opined that this derivation is not possible and if it is so derived it will not have the sense of a person who neglected his sacred vows (*vratas*). Now-a-days some scholars believe that the term 'Vrātya' should be derived from 'Vrāta', meaning 'tribe' or 'group' (*Vrāte samavetāḥ Vrātyāḥ*).[5]

According to some historians, the Vrātyas were a non-Aryan tribe,[6] while others have advocated their Aryan descent.[7] To us the view that they were Aryans of non-Vedic culture complex seems to be correct. From the *Pañchaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa*[8] it appears that they

1. *Bhāgvata P.*, V. 5, 29, 31 (Gita Press edn.).

2. *Karṇa parvan*, 37, 44-46; *Droṇa parvan*, 143.17.

3. *History of Dharmaśāstra*, II, p. 386.

4. Shastri, H., *Absorption of the Vrātyas*, Calcutta, 1926, p. 3 (Quoted by S. Singh, in *Evolution of the Smṛti Law*, Varanasi, 1972, p. 134).

5. Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

6. For example, Bhandarkar, Dutta, Ghosh, Bhagawat, etc. believe in this theory. For references see Singh, S., *op. cit.*, p. 138.

7. E.g. H. P. Shastri, Chattopadhyaya, Keny and Keith. For references see Singh, S., *op. cit.*, p. 138.

8. XVII. 10-15.

spoke Aryan language (*dīkshita vācham*) and that their patriarchs were known as gṛhapatis. But their ways of life differed from those of the Aryans. They were definitely not included within the pale of the Vedic orthodoxy. They did not approve of the Brāhmaṇical sacrifices[1] and partook a kind of surā presumably as a part of their religious practices.[2] From the *Pañchaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa* it appears that even in dress etc. they differed considerably from the Aryans. Significantly, according to this text, they were divided into two classes the *arhats* and *yaudhas* which remind one of the division of the Vedic community into *brahma* and *kshatra*. The use of the term '*arhat*' by the Vrātyas (later adopted by the Jainas) may also suggest that they were non-Vedic. The *arhats* and *yaudhas* were probably the Vrātya counterparts of Vedic *brahma* and *kshatra*.[3] In the *AV* Māgadha is connected with the Vrātya as a friend.[4] In the *Lāṭyāyana* (VIII. 6.28) and *Kātyāyana* (XXII. 4.24.) *Śrauta Sūtras* also the property of Vrātya (*Vrātyadhana*) is directed to be given to a low Brāhmaṇa or to a Māgadha Brāhmaṇa. These references indicate, if not prove, that the Vrātyas lived in the eastern part of the country which later on became the cradle of Buddhism.

The Vrātyas seem to have described their supreme being as Ekavrātya. In the Vrātya Kāṇḍa of the *AV* the Ekavrātya is described as practising austerities (*tapaḥ*), as standing erect for a whole year (XV. 3.1) and as having seven *prāṇas* (breaths), seven *apānas* (expirations) and seven *vyānas* (out-breathings) (XV. 15.1-2). It indicates his close association with yoga. He is said to have motivated Prajāpati and to have become beautiful, great, elder, Satya, Brahma and Tapas. He is said to have been followed in his marches by Bṛhat, Ādityas, Yajña, Viśvedevāḥ, Varuṇa, Soma, etc. (XI. 1.2 ff.). The gods are said to be his servants, Will his messenger and all beings his dependents. As pointed out by Sampurnanand,[5] the word Ekavrātya here does not seem to signify a human being. It appears to have a mystic significance like the Purusha of the Purusha-sūkta of the *RV*. His close affinity with Rudra is also clearly indicated. Certain features of his physical appearance such as blue belly and red back (XI. 1.7), his identification with Mahādeva (XV. 1.4) and association with yoga as well as the fact that among the deities of the Vrātyas

1. *AV*, XV, 12. 1-4.
2. Karmarkar, A.P., *The Vrātya System of Religion*, p. 23.
3. Dandekar, R. N., *Rudra in the Veda*, p. 8.
4. See Law, B.C., *Māgadhas in Ancient India*, London, 1946, p. 1.
5. Sampurnanand, *The Athrvaveda Vrātya Kāṇḍa*, p. 11.

were included Ugra, Rudra, Bhava, Śarva, Paśupati and Īśāna suggest that the Vrātyas contributed a lot to the worship of Rudra-Śiva. The *Pañchaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa* divides the Vrātyas into four categories—*hīna, gārāgir, śamanīchameḍhra* and *nindita.* Of these four categories the *gārāgir* (=swallowers of poison) reminds us of the munis of the *RV* who drank poison in the company of Rudra and the term *śamanīchameḍhra* (= one whose penis hangs low through control of passion) brings to mind the brahmachārīs.

Thus, we may conclude that the Vrātyas were the followers of a distinct religious cult which was Aryan but non-Vedic in origin and which had, on the one hand, close affinities with the cult of Rudra-Śiva and, on the other, was not unconnected with the Śramaṇic ideology of the later-day Jainas.

Chapter 3

Individual Renouncer in the Vedic Age : Conflict and Synthesis of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti Ideologies

Need of a Synthesis Between Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti Ideologies

The impact of the non-Vedic ideologies, delineated in Ch. 2, created a number of social and moral problems for the Vedic society and even threatened the very basis on which it rested. The non-Vedic ideologies on the one hand put the ideal of promiscuity (*kāmāchāra*) before the Aryans and, on the other, induced them towards other-worldly or Śramaṇic outlook—*munivṛtti* —which became the fountain-head of Jainism, Buddhism and such other Śramaṇic ideologies. It may appear as strange but it is a fact that the thinkers responsible for both these rather contradictory appearing outlooks were associated with the Rudra-Śiva cult. But the curious contrast in the two outlooks is more apparent than real, for even in the historical period Tāntrika religion, both Hindu and Buddhist, is found associated simultaneously with nivṛtti dharma aswell as the grossest and crudest forms of sexual rites. The erotic images found in the Śaiva temples of Khajuraho and other places are the best evidence of this combination in Śaivism. The Purāṇas are full of stories which narrate how Śiva used to go naked for begging alms making wives of ṛshis fall in love with him.[1] That there was an atmosphere of sexual laxity among many tribes of the Vedic age is a well-documented fact. Though the identification of these tribes is not always possible yet it can be readily imagined that they were associated with the Rudra and Liṅga cults discussed in Ch. 2. Their impact created a turmoil in the Vedic society. The Yama-Yamī dialogue of the tenth maṇḍala of the *RV* composed in the Middle Vedic Age records the mental agony of Yama whose sister Yamī wanted to have incestuous relations with him on the plea that they were sanctified by time and tradition while Yama felt that such

1. Cf. *B.C. Law Volume*, I, Calcutta, 1945, p. 461.

relationship violated the laws of Varuṇa. Here our suggestion that in the Indus Valley Civilization brother-sister marriages were prevalent may be recalled.[1] It is just possible that Yamī's plea emanated from the fact that in some tribes (of the Indus origin) such a tradition went back to great antiquity while Yama's arguments were based on the moral ideas of the enlightened sections of Vedic society. Thus, this instance is a fine example of a young man and woman living on the boundary line of two moralities. The *Mahābhārata* records several stories belonging to the characters of the Vedic age which relate how the Vedic Aryans had to safeguard their society from the impact of those who believed in promiscuous relations. According to one story, Dīrghatamā, a ṛshi, began to follow the life of complete sexual freedom—the custom of cattle or *go-dharma* — and other ṛshis had to expel him from the hermitage for this sin.[2] In the same epic at one place Pāṇḍu refers to the age when women were not bound with one husband; they had sexual relations with anybody they liked.[3] The institution of marriage was then introduced by Śvetaketu, the son of Uddālaka. As this type of promiscuous nature of sexual relations cannot be deduced from the moral ideas of the Vedic Aryans and as there are indications that many non-Aryan tribes followed such customs, it may be reasonably argued that promiscuity was not a feature of the Vedic society; rather, it was a danger to which the Vedic society was exposed.

Among the Aryans the importance of the life of householder (*gṛhastha*) was supreme. Their religion was this-worldly and its fulfilment depended upon the procreation of male progeny. Therefore, when some Aryans were attracted by the nivṛtti ideal of munis, it became a problem whether or not to denounce the philosophy of renunciation. That is why on the one hand our ancient literature is full of praise for munis, yatis and saṅnyāsīs and, on the other, numerous passages denounce them roundly. This dichotomous attitude is found in the *RV* itself which, on the hand, looks upon the munis as alien to the Vedic orthodoxy and, on the other, as a friend of Indra. Similarly, in yatis it sees a friend of the Bhṛgus but at the same time an enemy of Indra. But by and large till the end of the Middle Vedic Age the stronger tendency was to denounce all such groups. The *Mahābhārata* condemns the saṅnyāsīs as great sinners (*pāpishṭha*).[4] According to

1. *RHAI*, I, pp. 24-49.
2. Meyer, J.J., *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1952, p. 124.
3. *Mbh.*, 1.22.3-21.
4. *Ibid.*, 12.8.7.

a story,[1] the great penitent Jaratkāru, who was greedy for strength by penance, was persuaded by his forefathers to marry because without it he could not procreate a son needed for the performance of sacrifices for the liberation of manes. Similarly, it is said that though Kuṇigarga's daughter performed penances throughout her life yet she could go to heaven only after giving up her maidenhood by marrying Śṛṅgavāna.[2] In one passage Indra, the great god of this-worldly religious ideology, explains the futility of saṅnyāsa to certain sons of Brāhmaṇas who were intending to adopt the life of a recluse.[3] All these instances indicate the dilemma of those Aryans who were feeling attracted towards the life of renunciation but were at the same time finding it difficult to discard their heritage of looking at this world as something desirable.

What is Superior, Renunciation or Life of a Householder ? A Debate in the Pāṇḍava Family

The most interesting instance of the dilemma of the Aryans who were feeling attracted towards the life of renunciation but were finding it difficult to discard their heritage of looking at this world as something desirable is provided by a discussion between Yudhishṭhira on the one hand and his brothers and their wife Draupadī on the other. This discussion assumes the form of a debate in which Yudhishṭhira supports the ideal of renunciation while others support the ideal of the life of a householder. At a later stage sages Devasthāna and Vyasa and Śrī Kṛshṇa also participate in the discussion and support the ideal of leading the life of a *gṛhastha* devoted to the cult of sacifices. This debate throws a flood of light on the thinking of the Aryans of the Later Vedic age though obviously the exact date of the composition of this section of the Epic cannot be determined.

This discussion occurs in the beginning of the 'Rājadharmānuśāsanaparvan' of the Śānti Parvan (Chapters vii to xxxv). The discussion commences when Yudhishṭhira, already full of grief on account of the death of his relatives in the Great War, feels highly remorseful and guilty when he comes to know from Kuntī that Karṇa was also her son sired by Sūrya (and therefore a hall-brother of the Pāṇḍavas)—a secret which she had not disclosed to the Pāṇḍava brothers during the life-time of Karṇa. He then cursed all the women of the world saying, 'henceforth no women shall succeed in keeping

1. Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
2. Vedalankar, H., *Hindu Parivāra Mīmāṁsā*, Allahabad, V.S. 2011, p. 16.
3. *Mbh.*, 12. 11.27.

a secret.' (vi . 11). Then, burning with grief for Karṇa and holding himself responsible for his death, he told Arujuna that he had resolved to renounce the world. "Abandoning the whole of my kingdom, therefore, and all the worldly objects, I shall go to the forest, escaping from the worldly fetters, freed from grief, and without affection for anything." (vii. 41).

The decision of Yudhishṭhira was strongly opposed by Arjuna. He argued that in his (that is, Yudhishṭhira's) absence, "dishonest men will despoil sacrifices. To make no provision for the morrow is a practice that suits Ṛshis. You know this well ! Poverty is a sin. You should not, therefore, speak highly of poverty. A degraded man as also a poor man, both have to rue their fate. I see no difference between these two." (viii. 10-15). He further argued that "Religious acts, pleasures, joy, courage anger, learning, and sense of dignity,all originate from wealth." (viii. 21). He expressed the opinion that the expenses incurred by a king on Vedic sacrifices free his subjects from sins. "Those subjects whose king performs a horse-sacrifice with enough presents, are all freed from sins and sanctified by witnessing the ablutions at the end of the sacrifice." (viii. 35).

Yudhishṭhira was not impressed with these arguments of Arjuna. He expressed his resolve to lead an austere forest-life till his death. "Abandoning the pleasures and what men do in this world, and practising the austerest of penances, I shall wander in the forest, with the animals dwelling there, living on fruits and roots ! Pouring libations on the fire at the appointed time, I shall reduce myself by restricted diet, and clad in skins, bear matted locks on my head. Enduring cold, wind and heat, as also hunger and thirst and toil, I shall emaciate my body by penances as ordained in the scriptures. I shall not do the slightest harm to any creature, what to speak of those who live in villages and towns ? Leading a retired life and engaged in contemplation, I shall live upon ripe and unripe fruits and propitiate the departed manes and the gods with offerings of forest fruits and spring water and beautiful hymns. Thus leading an austere forest-life, I shall live on calmly awaiting the dissolution of my body. Or, living alone and observing the vow of silence, with my head shaven clean, I shall live by eating fruits each day of only one tree. Smearing my body with ashes, and living in forsaken houses, or lying at the foot of trees, I shall live, forsaking all things dear or hateful. Without being overgrieved, or overjoyed, and considering censure and applause, hope and affection in the same light and conquering the pairs of opposites, I shall live, casting off all the things of the world.

Without talking with anybody, I shall outwardly appear as a blind and deaf idiot, while living in contentment and deriving happiness from my innerself. ... If even a small quantity of pure food be not available in the first house (where I may go) I shall secure it by going to other houses. If I cannot procure it by even such a round, I shall go to seven houses successively and fill my cravings. I shall wander over the Earth, shorn of all desires. I shall not show any liking for life or dislike for death. If one cuts off one arms of mine and another smears the other with sandal-paste, I shall not wish evil to the one or good to the other. Abandoning all those acts which lead to prosperity and which one can do in life, the only acts I shall perform will be to open and shut my eyes and take as much food and drink as will barely keep up of my existence. Without ever being attached to action, and always restraining the senses, I shall abandon all desire and free the soul of all impurities. Freed from all attachments and snapping all fetters, I shall live as the wind. Being freed from affections, I shall enjoy everlasting contentment." (ix.4-16; ix.21-33).

These arguments of Yudhishṭhira were answered by Bhīmasena first. He said : "Your understanding, O King, cannot perceive the truth, like that of a foolish and unintelligent reciter of the Veda by the recitation of those scriptures." (x.1). "Wise men conversant with Kshatriya duties have said that they who stand in the way of the person taking the sovereignty of the Earth, should be killed. This act of our refusing the kingdom is like that of a person who having dug a well stops in his work before obtaining water and comes up covered with mire. Or, this our act is like that of a person who having climbed up a tall tree and collected honey therefrom dies before tasting it. Or, it is like that of a person who having set out on a long journey comes back in despair without having reached his goal. Or, it is like that of a person who having killed all his enemies, at last dies at his own hand. Or, it is like that of a person with hunger, who having obtained food, refuses to take it or of a person under the influence of passion, who having obtained a women reciprocating his desire refuses to know her." (xi. 7-13). "It has been laid down that (a life of) renunciation should be adopted, only in times of difficulty, by kings attacked with decrepitude or defeated by enemies. Wise men, therefore, do not praise renunciation as the duty of a Kshatriya. On the other hand, the clear-sighted think that the adoption of such a life (by a Kshatriya) involves even the loss of virtue. Person who are shorn of prosperity and wealth and who are unbelievers, have laid down this precept of the Vedas as the truth. In reality, however, it is

never proper for a Kshatriya to do so. That man only is capable of leading a solitary life of happiness in the forest who cannot support sons and grandsons and the deities and Ṛshis and guests and Pitṛs. As the deer and boars and birds cannot attain to heaven, even so those Kshatriyas who are not shorn of prowess cannot attain to heaven by leading only a forest life. They should acquire religious merit by other means. If anybody could secure success from renunciation, then mountains and trees would surely obtain it. These latter always lead the life of renunciation. They do not harm any one. They do not lead a life of worldliness and are all Brahmachārins. ...He who is shorn of action can never attain success. If they who fill only their own stomachs could achieve success, then all aquatic creatures would get it, for these have none else to support save their own selves." (x.17-27).

At this point Arjuna quoted Śakra the king of gods, who once successfully persuaded some ascetics to abandon the religion of renunciation and lead the life of householders by saying : "The life of a householder is very superior and sacred and is called the field of success. There is a verse in the Mantras which says,—(Ye sacrificer, perform the sacrifice with gifts of costly things, I will give you the happiness represented by sons, animals, and heaven.)— To live, therefore, in accordance with the ordinance is said to be the highest form of asceticism. Therefore, ye should perform sacrifices and penances in the shape of gifts." (xi.15, 18).

Then came the turn of Nakula who also spoke of the superiority of the life of householders. He said, "All persons acquainted with Vedas have declared the life of a householder to be superior to all the (other) modes of life. The person who in sacrifices gives away his fairly acquired wealth to these Brāhmaṇas who are well conversant with the Vedas, is regarded as the true renouncer. He, however, who, disregarding the life of a householder, the source of much happiness, adopts the next mode of life, renunciation, is renouncer possessed by the quality of darkness. That man who is houseless, who roves over the world like a mendicant who has the foot of a tree for his refuge, who observes the vow of silence, never cooks for himself, and tries to control his senses, is a renouncer observing the vow of mendicancy. That Brāhmaṇa who, disregarding anger and joy, and especially deceitfulness, always devotes his time to the study of the Vedas, is a renouncer observing the vow of mendicancy. The four different modes of life were at one time weighed in the balance. The wise have said that when the life of a househoder was placed on one scale, it required the three others to balance it. Marking

the result of this examination by scales, and seeing further that the life of a householder alone contained both heaven and pleasure, the great Ṛshis and the persons conversant with the ways of the world followed it. He, therefore, who follows this mode of life, thinking it to be his duty and abandoning all desire for fruit, is a true renouncer, and not that man who having clouded understanding goes to the forest abandoning home. The renouncer that rigidly follows this mode of life, in which one is free to do acts, has not to meet ruin either here or hereafter. The holy Lord of all creatures, of righteous soul, created creatures with the purpose that they would worship him by sacrifices with profuse presents. I have never seen a king living as a householder renouncing his wealth in any other way except in the Rājasūya, the Aśvamedha, and other kinds of sacrifices ! If, without celebrating great sacrifices and the rites in honor of your deceased manes, and if, without bathing in sacred waters, you live the life of a mendicant you will meet with destruction like a small cloud, saperated from a mass and driven by the winds. You will then fall off from both the worlds and will be born as a Piśācha. A person becomes a true renouncer by casting off internal and external attachments, and not simply by leaving home for dwelling in the forest." (xii. 6-14, 18-22, 27, 33-35).

Then Sahadeva, the youngest of the Pāṇḍava brothers, contributed his bit by arguing that "By renouncing all external objects only one does not obtain success. Even in the casting off of mental attachments, the attainment of success is doubtful." (xiii. 1).

After Sahadeva, Draupadī advanced some arguments against renunciation and some in favour of leading the life of a householder. She argued that "Love for all creatures, charity, study of the Vedas, and penances,—are the duties of a Brāhmaṇa and not of a king." She reminded Yudhishṭhira that it was not by study, or gift, or mendicancy, that he had acquired the Earth. (xiv. 14, 17). She even tauntingly said, "If, O King, these your brothers had been sane, they would then have locked you up with all the unbelievers (in a prison) and taken charge of the government of the Earth." (xiv. 31).

But Yudhishṭhira could be convinced neither by his brothers and nor by Draupadī. He told them : "Of the two, the king who rules this wide unbounded Earth, and the person who regards gold and pebbles in the same light, the latter is said to have attained the object of his life and not the former. They who have given up desire and enjoyment have never to grieve. You, however, grieve for enjoyments. Abandoning desire and enjoyment, you may succeed in

freeing yourself from false speech. By penances, by Brahmacharyya, by study, the great Ṛshis, casting off their bodies, go to regions which are above the power of Death." (xvii. 12, 16). Then he quoted an old *gāthā* of Janaka in which the Videha king is said to have said, "My wealth is boundless, yet I have nothing. If the whole of Mithilā were burnt to ashes, nothing of mine will be burnt." (xvii. 19). To answer this argument of Yudhishṭhira Arjuna reminded him that when Janaka resolved to practise the vow of mendicancy his queen fearlessly told him : "You, before this, supported thousands of Brāhmaṇas versed in the three Vedas and many more others. How can you desire to beg of them your own food today. Sinful as you are, you will acquire neither this world nor the next, since you wish to live, having cast off your married wife ?" (xviii. 11-15). She very logically and pointedly asked Janaka : "If you hold that kingdom and a handful of barley are the same to you, then why do you abandon the former." (xviii. 20). Further she told Janaka: "In this world, the food given by a charitable person is the support of the pious. If, therefore, the king does not give (food), where will the pious, who aspire for salvation, go ? They that have food (in their houses) are householders. Mendicants are supported by them. Life is kept up by food. Therefore, the giver of food is the giver of life. Coming out from among those who live as householders, mendicants depend upon those very persons from whom they come." (xviii. 27-29). "They who, casting off the three Vedas, their usual avocations and children, live like mendicants by taking up the triple-headed rod and the brown robe, are really persons of weak understanding. Without having cast off anger and other passions, wearing only the brown robe, is due to the desire of earning the means of livelihood. Those persons of clean-shaven heads who hold up the banner of virtue, have the acquisition of sustenance for their only object in life." (xviii. 33-34).

The discussion between Yudhishṭhira and the members of his family was interrupted by Ṛshi Devasthāna who justified the religion of householder because in his view also it was necessary for the performance of sacrifices. He therefore advised Yudhishṭhira not to renounce the kingdom without any cause and to perform a great sacrifice. He told the king that "the Supreme Creator created wealth for sacrifice, and He created man also for taking care of that wealth and for celebrating sacrifice. For this reason, the entire wealth of a man should be devoted to the celebration of a sacrifice. This would beget pleasure as a matter of course."

The final word on the problem came from Kṛshṇa Dvaipāyana

Vyāsa who, supporting Arjuna, said : "The highest religion as sanctioned by the scriptures, consists in the duties of a householder. You are acquainted with all duties. Do you then duly practise the duties prescribed for you (viz., the duties of a householder). A life of retirement in the forest forgetting the duties of a householder, has not been laid down for you. The gods, Pitṛs, guests and servants all depend (for their maintenance) upon a householder. Do you then support all these. Birds and animals and various other creatures are supported by householders. He, therefore, who belongs to that mode of life, is superior to all. The life of a householder is the most difficult of all the four modes of life. Do you practise that mode of life then which is difficult of being practised by persons of uncontrolled senses." (xxii. 2-6).

But Yudhishṭhira could not be easily convinced. Now, almost in the language of the Buddhists, Vyāsaji gave him a sermon on the problem of suffering. "There is only sorrow in this world and not happiness. Therefore only sorrow is felt. There is no end of grief, and grief originates from happiness itself. Happiness and misery, prosperity and adversity, gain and loss, death and life, in their turn, visit all creatures.Therefore the wise man, with equanimity of soul, would neither be puffed up with joy nor be depressed with sorrow." (xxv. 30-31). "Having studied all the Vedas and the other scriptures duly, having protected the kingdom duly, and having made all the four orders follow their respective duties, a king becomes purified and finally sports in heaven." (xxv. 35). "Wealth was created by the Creator for celebrating sacrifices, and man was created by him for protecting that wealth and performing sacrifices. For this all wealth should be devoted to sacrifices. It is not proper that it should be spent for enjoyments. Those foolish people who give away (wealth) to men who have neglected the duties of their order, have to live hereafter for a hundred years on ordure and dirt." (xxvi. 25, 29).

In the end Arjuna requested Śrī Kṛshṇa to remove the grief of Yudhishṭhira who gave a sermon to the latter on disinterested action (*nishkāma karma*) in brief and cited an old discourse of Nārada who had tried to give solace to the grief-stricken Sṛñjaya by narrating the stories of sixteen great kings of the past whose grief had been removed by assiduously performing the Vedic sacrifices.[1] This in brief is the conclusion of this debate as well.

1. The teachings of the *Gītā* given to the grief-stricken Arjuna would had suited here for Yudhishṭhira was even more grief-stricken for his relatives than was the case with Arjuna.

Significance of the Resolve of Yudhishṭhira to Renounce Householders' Life in the History of Śramaṇism

The debate between Yudhishṭhira on the one hand and his brothers, Draupadī, Ṛshi Devasthāna, Dvaipāyana Vyāsa and Lord Kṛshṇa on the other on the relative merit of the life of a householder and that of a renouncer is extremely significant. It shows that by that time (that is, by the time this section of the *Mahābhārata* was composed) the *nivṛtti* ideology had become popular among at least some sections of the Aryan society, including royalty. About half a dozen characteristic features of Śramaṇism delineated in Ch. 1 (out of about a dozen) are mentioned by Yudhishṭhira. Apart from his general preference for *nivṛtti dharma*, he specifically talks of giving up the life of a householder (*gṛha-tyāga*), living the life of a wanderer and a celebate with clean-shaven head, depending upon *bhikshācharyā* and performing severe austerities (*tapas*). Taken collectively these characteristics give the impression that Yudhishṭhira was talking of adopting Śramaṇic way of life, in fact if not in name. But that was not so. Yudhishṭhira, it may be noted, seems to be unaware of many features of Śramaṇism which later-day Buddhism and Jainism advocated. For example, he does not speak of *saṁsāravāda* and *karmavāda*, of the denial of the existence of god/gods (*aniśvaravāda*), of the rejection of the authority of the Vedas and does not even hint at opposing the varṇa system. The non-mention of the tīrthas and tīrthaṅkaras also proves that his thinking was not exactly parallel with the Śramaṇa ideology. The point is conclusively proved by the fact that he seems to completely unaware of monasticism which was an essential feature of Śramaṇism.

The reasons of Yudhishṭhira falling short of full-fledged Śramaṇism seem to have been may. It is obvious that a reference to *saṁsāravāda* (theory of transmigration or of the cycle of birth and death) and *karmavāda* would had been central in the argument of Yudhishṭhira, if he had been aware of them. But he does not even allude to them. Probably by the time these chapters of the *Mahābhārata* were composed, *karmavāda* , a belief in an immortal conscious principle (*ātman*), and an urge for *mukti* or *moksha* without which the concept of *saṁsāravāda* can not be thought of and which are nowhere mentioned in the early Vedic literature, were still beyond the pale of the Vedic ideology. As G.C. Pande has shown, these ideas were regarded as strange, even secret, in the Brāhmaṇical circles even at the time the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upa.* was composed (*infra*). It is, therefore, not impossible that they were also not known

to the author of this section of the *Mahābhārata* who in that case, could not make Yudhishṭhira cognizant of them.

Here, it may be also noted that these chapters of the *Mahābhārata* seek to extol the cult of sacrifice. Except Yudhishṭhira all those who participated in the discussion spoke highly of the efficacy of the *yajñas* making their performance the pivot of true religion. All of them obviously believed that the entire life and wealth of a man should be devoted to the celebration of sacrifices. The kings are specially enjoined to perform such grand sacrifices as Aśvamedha and Rājasūya.

Yudhishṭhira in his argument does not allude to specific features of monasticism also, that is to tīrthas, tīrthaṅkaras and any monastic order or *saṅgha* which he could join after renouncing the world. He projects himself as an individual renouncer-to-be. Incidentally, it may be recalled that all the members of the Pāṇḍava family who repaired to the forest after the Great War (Dhṛtarāshṭra, Gāndhārī, Kuntī, Vidura, etc.) became individual renouncers only. In case of none of them a reference is made to his/her joining some *saṅgha* or any such organisation. It simply means that by that time monasticism, a prominent characteristic of Śramaṇism, had not developed. It is no wonder, therefore, if Yudhishṭhira does not speak of monasticism when a reference to it would had been quite natural and in tune with his thinking.

Yudhishṭhira does not raise his voice against varṇa organisation also, an opposition to which later on became central in Śramaṇa ideology. His thinking on this problem was conditioned probably by the fact that by that time varṇa organistion in its classical form had not come into existence. Of course in that age Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras were known but only as classes with some features of Varṇa system making their appearance. It was still a hotly debated question whether one belongs to a particular varṇa by the accident of birth or by following a particular vocation. The superiority of Brāhmaṇas over others, specially over the Kshatriyas, was as yet mainly a theoretical issue. We should remember that even the Buddha and Mahāvīra did not question varṇa system as such; they only gave first place to the Kshatriyas rather than to the Brāhmaṇas without suggesting any other material change in the scheme.[1]

It should also be remembered that the varṇa system with implied acceptance of the superiority of Brāhmaṇas was an important

1. *Infra*, pp. 43-45.

factor in Vedic social organisation. In the age when Brāhmaṇa texts were composed and sacrificial religion became supreme, the members of the Brāhmaṇa varṇa were bound to be given the greatest respect. Therefore, an opposition to Varṇa organisation and to the superiority of the Brāhmaṇas could at the most have been a reaction to the Vedic social thought; it could not have been a result of its internal evolution.

Some features of Śramaṇism which Yudhishṭhira does not mention seem to have developed in the Vedic age outside the pale of Vedic orthodoxy. It is independently proved by the existence of yoga-knowing people in the Indus Valley Civilization. It is just possible that with yoga, which was not known in the early Aryan society, the Indus Civilization contributed some other related features of the nivṛtti religious ideology to the pravṛtti-mārgī Vedic society. The Keśī-sūkta of the *Ṛgveda* (x. 136) delineates for us the strange figure of munì who is described as long-haired, clad in dirty, tawny coloured garment, walking in the air or flying, delirious with the state of being a muni (*mauneya*) and inspired (*unmadita*). Obviously, the author of the Keśī-sūkta was aware of the fact that the munis were conversant with yoga. Among them were probably included Jaina munis as well.[1] Their time and place cannot be determined and hence they cannot be regarded as historical but it is now rightly believed that some of them such as Ṛshabhanātha, Pārśvanātha and probably Neminātha were actual personages. Their ideology is not known in detail but about Pārśvanātha it is certain that he championed a developed form of Śramaṇism which was akin to the Śramaṇism of the Buddha and Mahāvīra.

Thus, the *Mahābhārata* passage regarding Yudhishṭhira's intention of renunciation shows that when this portion of the Epic was composed some Śramaṇic ideas had become quite well-developed, some were in the process of development and some were still beyond the ken of the ideology of the Aryans. Further, it also makes it obvious that an interaction between Vedic and Śramaṇic ideologies in the form they were at that time was taking place in the intellectual sections of the Aryan society.

Upanishads as a Link Between Vedic Ideology and Śramaṇism

Some attempts at the synthesis between the pravṛtti ideal of the Vedic and the nivṛtti ideal of the Śramaṇic thought-currents was made by the thinkers of the Upanishadic age also. The Upanishads on the one

1. *Supra*, pp. 19 ff.

hand present a natural development of the Vedic thought and on the other 'a half turn' towards Śramaṇic asceticism.[1] The Upanishadic doctrines in the main represent a continuation and development of Middle Vedic religion but when we suddenly come across at places with belief in transmigration and emphasis on the fundamental values of asceticism, it becomes obvious that here we have to do with Śramaṇa influence.[2] For example, the second *adhyāya* of the *Chhāndogya* mentions that there are three sections of dharma—sacrifice, sacred study and liberality and identifies them respectively with tapas, brahmacharya and total gifting to the preceptor. Of these the first two instantly remind one of Śramaṇism. In the fourth *adhyāya* it is said that one who knows Brahman does not really care for wordly things and that human life is full of desires, transgressions and diseases, and so death is no worse. Further, it mentions a Devapatha or Brahmapatha. Those who follow it do not return to the human whirlpool. According to G. C. Pande, it is obviously a reference to the doctrine of Rebirth[3] which is here related with sin and ignorance. In the seventh *adhyāya* of this text Nārada declares that he is suffering misery from which he seeks deliverance through self-knowledge. Here *brahma jijñāsā* is connected with sorrowfulness of life. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* when Yājñavalkya is about to leave home life, he is made to declare that the quest for immortality (*amṛtattva*) is different from the quest for wealth (*vitta*). Spiritual life leads to an end where all dualistic consciousness is lost. The psyche dies with body; only the 'great being' (*mahābhūtam*) remains. This remarkably anticipates the doctrine of Nirvāṇa as understood by the Vijñānavādin Buddhists.[4]

The most significant Śramaṇic doctrine was that of rebirth or transmigration (*Saṁsāra*) in accordance with the law of karman. One of the greatest problems of the history of Indian thought is the origin of this doctrine and the reason for its rapid spread and almost universal acceptance. S. K. Chatterji traces the idea of transmigration back to "Austric Proto-Austroloids."[5] But V. M. Apte questions the theory

1. Pande, G.C., *Śramaṇa Tradition : Its History and Contribution to Indian Culture*, Ahmedabad, 1978, p. 4.

2. For the antiquity of Śramaṇism see Goyal, *RHAI*, I, pp. 95 ff. Also see Jain, Bhagchandra, 'The Antiquity of the Śramaṇa Cult', *World Buddhism*, XV, No.1, pp. 3-6.

3. Pande, G. C., *op. cit.*, p. 7.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

5. Cf. *The Vedic Age*, Bombay, 1965, p. 151.

that the Aryans derived transmigration from "the animistic views of the aborgines."[1] The doctrine of karman implies that whatever action is done by the individual leaves behind it some sort of potency which has the power to ordain for him joy or sorrow in future according as it is good or bad. When combined with the doctrine of rebirth, it implies that when the fruits of actions are such that they cannot be enjoyed in this life, one has to take another birth in order to enjoy them. The act passes away as soon as it is done, but its moral effect is treasured in potency which fructifies in future.[2] Some scholars have seen the origin of the doctrine of rebirth in accordance with karman in the eschatological speculations of the Brāhmaṇas. This has rightly been questioned. There are absolutely no traces of the doctrine of transmigration in the *RV*. In the *RV* focus of attention was on earthly life, the world of the dead beings regarded as merely shadowy. The *RV* X. 163 suggests that after death a man might pass to water or plants and that *manas* becomes one with cosmos rather than that it is reborn. While operation of a moral law or *ṛta* in the universe was recognized, it was regarded as dependent on the will of gods who enforce it and the will of men who recognize it and seek to follow it. As regards the Brāhmaṇas it is true, as Keith has pointed out, that in these texts the notion of *punarmṛtyu* or death in the afterworld is found.[3] But here *punarmṛtyu* seems to refer to a second birth in heaven. In the *AB* VII. 13.6 a man survives in the person of his son. As has been shown by M. Chakravarti, the usual attitude of the Brāhmaṇas towards afterlife does not assume a belief in the doctrine of *saṁsāra*, the recurring cycle of death and birth. In the Brāhmaṇas the sacrificer is reborn after death into the midst of gods and enjoys an immortal existence imagined after the manner of the worldly life.[4] On the other hand, as argued by G.C. Pande, the doctrine of transmigration presupposes a belief in an immortal conscious principle (*ātman*), recognition of the law of karman and a deep seated urge for mukti.

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 496.

2. For a detailed history of the doctrine of karma in the Vedic age vide Dubey, S. P., 'The Concept of Karma in the Vedic Literature', *Bhāratī*, 1963-64, pp. 105 ff. For a psychological justification of the doctrine of rebirth see Banerjee, H.N., 'The Concept of Rebirth in Indian Tradition', *Indian Journal of Parapsychology*, VI, No. 3, pp. 49-71.

3. Keith, A. B., *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, Cambridge, 1925, p. 5.

4. Chakravarti, Moni, 'Metempsychosis in the Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas of the Ṛgveda', *ABORI*, XLII, 1961, pp. 155-62.

The doctrines of karman and rebirth have been called primitive ideas or original Vedic ideas or ideas which developed gradually within the Vedic schools of thought. According to Pande, however, these ideas appear to have intruded into the Vedic thought from the pre-existing stream of non-Vedic ideology which was represented by the Munis and Śramaṇas. By the Later Vedic Age the Vedic thinkers had become prepared to receive these ideas, and so we find some sudden references to them in the Upanishads. However, from these references it is also clear that these ideas were new for them.[1] For example, in the *Bṛ. Upa.*, in the symposium at the court of Janaka, Ārtabhāga asks Yājñavalkya what happens to a man after death ? To answer this Yājñavalkya took Ārtabhāga aside and taught him the doctrine of karman. It suggests that at that time the doctrine of rebirth in accordance with karman was regarded as a strange, even secret, doctrine in the Brāhmaṇical circles. As pointed out by Basham, in the Pāli texts, on the other hand, transmigration is taken for granted. "With the exception of the school of materialists, who completely denied any form of survival after death, there is no difference of opinion whatever in the fact of transmigration, or in the desirability of achieving the salvation which frees a man from the cycle of birth and dealth. The only differences between one sect and another in this respect concern the mechanics of the process of rebirth and the nature of the state of final equilibrium which is attained when the individual escapes from the toils of *saṁsāra*. Nowhere, to the best of our knowledge, do we find in the Buddhist texts a teacher trying to convince his hearers of the actual fact of transmigration. This must surely imply that, by the time of the Buddha, the doctrine was almost universally accepted by ordinary people throughout the civilized part of India. Just how this great change came about, and why it did so, is completely unknown. The suggestion that it is derived from indigenous non-Aryan beliefs is little more than a guess, and the evidence of the texts themselves rather suggests that it began in small circles of high class people, whether Kṣatriyas or Brāhmans."[2]

However, the acceptance of the doctrines of saṁsāra and karman caused a veritable spiritual revolution in the Vedic society. The early Vedic religion was life-affirming; the post-Vedic attitude is of life-negating or *nivṛtti*. This change came about mainly through the change in the conception of life which the doctrines of saṁsāra

1. Pande, G. C., *Origins*, pp. 216 ff.; *Śramaṇa Tradition*, pp. 12-13.

2. Basham, A. L., in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. by A. K. Narain, Delhi, 1980, p. 14.

and karman implied. If the moral quality of an action is the sole and irrevocable determinant of future, man becomes the arbiter of his destiny and both priests and sacrifices cease to be indispensable. Bound by this law even gods become no more than the souls born in a certain station. Explaining the philiosophy of karman Yājñavalkya states: "According as one acts, according as one conducts himself, so does he become, the doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil. Desire is the source of saṁsāra. In its absence even karman does not bind." This is a typically Buddhist doctrine, also supported by the doctrine of nishkāma action of the *Gītā*.

That Yājñavalkya was fully aware of Munis, Śramaṇas and their ideology also becomes obvious from his dialogue with Janaka. In it the former, while explaining what may lead to Vimoksha, speaks of a state of deep sleep where a Chāṇḍāla is not a Chāṇḍāla, a Paulkasa is not a Paulkasa, a Śramaṇa is not a Śramaṇa and a Tāpasa is not a Tāpasa. Elsewhere he says that the Brāhmaṇas, the Munis and Parivrājakas all seek emancipation of soul from the round of birth and death through non-desiring (*atha akāmaya-mānaḥ*). The Brāhmaṇas seek it through reciting the Vedas, sacrifice and liberality and the Muni Parivrājakas through austerities and fasting. These references to Munis and Śramaṇas and the doctrines of rebirth and karman show that Yajñavalkya was conversant with the Śramaṇa doctrines and was influenced by them though his theistic affiliations clearly distinguish his philosophy from Śramaṇism.[1]

The acquaintance with the doctrine of saṁsāra becomes clearer in the metrical Upanishads. The second *adhyāya* of the *Kaṭha* mentions Munis directly and describes the process of human bondage and liberation. "When all desires of heart are removed then the mortal becomes immortal and attains Brahman here." According to G. C. Pande, this suggests the possibility of *jīvanamukti* or Arhathood.

The greatest influence of Śramaṇism is found in the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, the very name of which suggests the influence of the Śramaṇas. It condemns sacrifices as 'frail boats' and declares that those who follow the ritualistic path and engage in charitable works cannot become free from the cycle of death and birth. This Upanishad also refers to *bhikshācharyā*, to Yatis who abandoned inner evils and practised truth, to *tapas*, *brahmacharya* and right knowledge (*samyak-jñāna*). The *Īśopanishad* discusses the contradiction between the traditional Vedic philosophy of action, ritualistic and moral, and the Śramaṇic philosophy of renunciation. Like the *Gītā*, it reaches the

1. Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 21.

conclusion that if action is done with the spirit of dedication and a sense of the presence of God, it does not bind the doer—*na karma lipyate nare*. Indeed action must not be abandoned; one should always remain engaged in action.

However, it should be kept in mind that though the Upanishads are generally aware of the doctrines of rebirth in accordance with one's actions, and renunciation, it cannot be maintained that these texts as a whole advocate other-worldly ideology. According to Prof. Pande, "The prevailing doctrine in the Upaniṣads is a manifestation of divine being and energy. The many gods of the earlier period were no doubt merged into one Great Being identified with the Self but the result was a spiritual view ofthe universe where ...every finite object is nothing but a limited expression of Brahman. Creation and manifestation are held to be real, not illusory. It is true that occasional utterances denying duality or asserting unreality of Name and Form can be quoted on the other side. But... the realistic interpretation appears to be the correct one."[1] Thus, it would seem that though the Upanishads give evidence of gradually increasing impact of Śramaṇic ideology, yet their main emphasis was still on positive, active and robust outlook on life seeking a higher reality behind what we see.

Āśrama Organisation as a Device of New Synthesis

But the impact of the Śramaṇic tendencies on the Vedic society in the Upanishadic age does not necessarily mean that the saṅnyāsa āśrama had become institutionalized in that early period. The scheme of the four stages or āśramas of an individual's life is regarded as an important feature of ancient Hinduism. Literally the word āśrama means 'a hermitage' or 'resting place', but technically it means a stage in the life of a Hindu. The scheme of four āśramas was essentially socio-religious in nature. It recognised four stages, namely, *brahmacharya* (the stage of being a student of the Vedas), *gṛhastha* (the stage of a householder), *vānaprastha* (the stage of a hermit) and *saṅnyāsa* (the stage of an abandoner of all worldly concerns).[2] Some early scholars including Max Müller, Bühler and Jacobi believed that asceticism arose in the Vedic society itself. Jacobi has suggested that the Brāhmaṇa ascetic supplied the common prototype which was copied by the Buddhists as well as the Jainas. In support of this view it is argued that both the Jaina and the Buddhist rules of discipline for the mendicant resemble those found in the law-

1. *Ibid.*
2. Cf. Pande, G.C., in *History of Punjab*, ed. L.M. Joshi, Patiala, 1977, p. 158.

books of Gautama and Baudhāyana. But the weakness of this theory has been shown by S. K. Dutt and G. C. Pande.[1] As argued by Pande, the aforesaid resemblances consist in the main of rules of a very general character. The first four great vows of the Saṁnyāsin, for instance, may be said to belong to the universal repertoire of asceticism. In order words, if there was borrowing, it was not so much of particular regulations as to the ideal of the ascetic. Secondly, the word 'āśrama' does not occur in the Saṁhitās or the Brāhmaṇas. According to Kane also, there is nothing in the Vedic literature expressly corresponding to the Vānaprastha.[2] The term āśrama itself is not very old. Its earliest use is found in the expression '*atyāśramibhyaḥ*' which occurs in the *Śvetāśvatara Upa.* (VI.21). But, according to Pande,[3] this expression seems to imply that mendicancy was as yet beyond the ken of the āśramas. According to Kane, perhaps the earliest reference to the four āśramas occurs in a passage of the *Ait. Br.* (33.1) which states "What use is there of dirt, what use of antelope skin, what use of tapas ? O Brāhmaṇa, desire a son; he is world to be highly praised." But to find here a reference to the four āśramas appears quite speculative. Kane admits that even in the much clearer reference of the *Chhāndogya* (II.23.1) there was as yet no clear distinction between the third and the fourth āśramas. Some Upanishadic references discussed above undoubtedly show acquaintance with mendicancy, though it is doubtful if they imply a scheme of the four āśramas. As regards the Dharmasūtras, they are of uncertain date and even the supposedly oldest of them, Gautama and Baudhāyana, appear to be, in their present shape, works of a composite nature. According to Hopkins, the Sūtras cannot be earlier than the seventh and later than the second century B.C. It does not, therefore, appear to be safe to assume that the theories accepted in these works were well-established dogmas in the Brāhmaṇa circles prior to the 6th century B.C. when at least the Jainas were already an old and respected sect. It should also be remembered that the Brāhmaṇa society itself was opposed to the fourth āśrama. The whole sacrifical tradition with its material values was anti-asceticism. The passage of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* quoted above is a good description of the values cherished by the Vedic society. It is true that is some early Upanishads a 'half turn' is found towards the ascetic ideal, but

1. Dutt, S. K., *Early Buddhist Monachism*, London, 1924, pp. 39 ff.; Pande, *Origins*, pp. 322-24; cf. also Joshi, L.M., *op. cit.*, pp. 158-65.

2. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra,* II, Pt. i, p. 418.

3. Pande, *Origins*, p. 322.

even in them the main emphasis is on positive, active and robust outlook on life.[1] And "it may not be without significance that the Upaniṣad most vociferous in the denunciation of sacrifice and the advocacy of the 'Fourth Āśrama' is entitled the 'Upaniṣad of the Muṇḍakas'."[2] The fact that the theory of the four āśramas was not as yet a finally settled theory in the age of the Dharmasūtras is obvious from the irregularity of the nomenclature adopted by them in this respect. Āpastamba speaks of gṛhastha, āchāryakula, mauna and vānaprastha. Gautama has brahmachārī, gṛhastha, bhikshu and vaikhānasa, while Vasishṭha and Baudhāyana speak of brahmachārī, gṛhastha, vānaprastha and parivrājaka,[3] According to G.C. Pande, originally the āśramas recognised in the Vedic tradition were the first two. Later on, possibly with the dawn of the age of the upāsanās, the practice of repairing to the forests came into vogue which in course of time grew into a veritable institution.[4] All the while, outside the strictly Vedic pale, were wandering groups of ascetics, sometimes styled the Munis. When towards the close of the Upanishadic Age Brāhmaṇic values underwent a change and some sections within the Vedic society tended to accept the pessimistic world-view which the doctrine of *saṁsāra* entails, the institution of the fourth āśrama, namely saṅnyāsa, was postulated. In other words, the ideal of the ascetic appears to have come down to the Jainas and the Buddhists, not from the Brāhmaṇas, but from the previously existing muni-śramaṇa sects. Further, it should also be conceded that the acceptance of the ascetic ideal in the Vedic society in the form of saṅnyāsa āśrama took place in the post-Upanishadic period though ascetic tendencies were recognised even in the Upanishads themselves.

Purushārtha and Varṇa System as Devices of New Synthesis

The mutual contact of the various Aryan (belonging to both 'Vedic' and 'non-Vedic' categories) and non-Aryan(belonging to both 'Indus' and 'non-Indus' traditions) cultural currents produced not only their mixture but also a compound—not only a combination of the various ideologies but also something entirely new. It led not only to the emergence of the Āśrama theory as the ideal pattern for the life of the individual but also to the rise of the ideal of the Purushārtha as the

1. Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 22.

2. Pande, *Origins*, p. 325.

3. For the evolution of the āśrama theory in the Dharmaśātras see Chakraborty, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, pp. 50-82.

4. Pande, *Origins*, p. 326; cf. also Joshi, L. M., *Brāhmaṇism, Buddhism and Hinduism*, Kandy, 1970, pp. 45 ff.

goal of human life and of the the varṇa system as the ideal pattern for social organisation. All these three institutions aimed at arriving a synthesis between the conflicting claims of the divergent *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* ideologies. Much of this synthesis, specially the emergence of the Āśrama and the Purushārtha doctrines, took place in the Later Vedic or the Upanishadic Age, or even later. But the varṇa system, which later on became transformed into the caste system, began to be solidified in the Middle Vedic Age itself.

The chief obstacles in the cultural assimilation of the Aryan and non-Aryan races were not only the differences in their linguistic, mental and cultural make-up, but also their divergent, physical traits. In modern times the Japanese find it more difficult to mix up with the American than the Europeans do because of their racial complexion; the Japanese wear, as it were, 'a racial uniform' which classifies them instantly. The menance of the black-skinned non-Aryans was the Vedic Indian counterpart of the Yellow Peril which the modern Americans have been so conscious of. Under these circumstances though the Aryans and the non-Aryans lived together, each playing a role in politico-economic life, yet for a long time they did not interbreed to a perceptible extent. In other countries the relations of the conquered with the conquering people usually took the form of slavery. In India when the process of adjustment began it assumed the form of varṇa system (which gradully transformed itself into the caste system) which made both of them integral parts of one society. The varṇa system was thus a form of accommodation in which the problems created by the inflow of tribal waves (and many other problems) found solution.

But the emergence of the varṇa system did not solve the problem of the 'marginal man' completely, because from the very beginning the varṇa system was based, at least in practice, on birth and not on a person's qualifications and inclinations (as probably was the theoretical assumption), and, therefore, it only produced an additional category of persons who found that crossing the barriers of one's own hereditary group was not easy. The prevalent view that in the Vedic age the varṇa of an individual was decided by his vocation and not birth is not correct. Viśvāmitra, a Kshatriya, wanted to attain the status of a Brāhmaṇa but despite his great spiritual attainments, admired even by his opponents, he could not fulfil his ambition. Mahidāsa Aitareya, the author of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, was the son of Itarā, a Śūdrā. His father, who had other sons born of wives of higher castes, treated him shabbily and did not give him his name. In the Upanishadic age Jānaśruti Pautrāyaṇa, a Śūdra, succeeded in

persuading Raikva by the allurement of sumptuous gifts to impart real knowledge to him, but himself could not rise above the status of Śūdra. Similarly, in the *Mahābhārata* Karṇa, known as the son of a charioteer (*sūta*), was not accepted as a Kshatriya even when he was raised to the status of the king of Aṅga by Duryodhana; Draupadī flatly refused to let him participate in her *svayaṁvara* on the plea of his low caste. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* Śambūka, a Śūdra, is cold-bloodedly killed by the hero of the epic himself for his ambition to become a *tapasvī*. The agony of people like Kavasha Ailūsha, Madidāsa Aitareya, Viśvāmitra, Karṇa, Jānaśruti Pautrāyaṇa and Śambūka is not difficult to be imagined. Here, it is interesting to recall that in the same society Brāhmaṇas such as Paraśurāma and Droṇa, who spent their lives pursuing the activities of a Kshatriya warrior, were accepted unhesitatingly by everybody as Brāhmaṇas. It will not, however, be correct to assume that only Brāhmaṇas had such a dichotomous attitude towards varṇa system. The Kshatriyas also suffered from a sense of superiority complex. That is why the Buddha and Mahāvīra, on the one hand, denounced the four-fold varṇa system and the Brāhmaṇic claim of superiority over others and, on the other, were never tired of claiming the highest status for the Kshatriyas. This psychology, if properly understood and interpreted, may explain a number of problems of the social aspects of ancient Indian religious history, including the problem of the social outlook of the Śramaṇic tradition.

Chapter 4

Features of Śramaṇism in the Age of the Buddha and Mahāvīra

Dichotomy Between Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas

The religious sects of early Buddhist age may broadly be grouped as Brāhmaṇical and non-Brāhmaṇical, the former being referred to as *āstika* and the latter as *nāstika*. Āstika or Brāhmaṇic does not mean theistic. It denotes the systems which recognize the Vedas and their branches as supreme authority. For example, Sāṅkhya is usually regarded as an atheistic philosophy, yet it is a Brāhmaṇical system, because it accepts the authority of the Vedas (*Veda prāmāṇyam*). Buddhism and Jainism are regarded as *nāstika* or non-Brāhmaṇical because they do not acept the authority of the Vedic texts. Manu defines *nāstika* as a person who challenges the authority of the Vedas (*nāstiko Vedanindakaḥ*). According to another view, *āstika* is one who believes in the existence of the future world, etc. According to this interpretation, the Buddhists and the Jainas are not *nāstikas*. Nāgārjuna, the famous Buddhist scholar, uses the term in this sense when he says, "A *nāstika* is doomed to hell." It will thus be a misnomer to dub the Buddhists and the Jainas as *nāstikas*. They should rather be called *avaidikas* (non-Vedic sects).

The Buddhist and Jaina literatures appear to speak of all the non-Brāhmaṇical systems as Śramaṇa in the frequent expression '*samaṇa vā brāhmaṇa vā*'. In that age it was a common practice that a person who intended to lead a homeless life and thought that he could not realize the Truth by his personal efforts, went to some religious teacher for instruction. Such teachers gathered around them a large number of disciples as is obvious from the instances of the Jaṭila teachers of Urvela and Sañjaya of Rājagaha. In the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*[1] Samaṇas are distinguished as those who are not Brāhmaṇas by birth but have renounced the worldly life while Brāhmaṇas are those who are born in Brāhmaṇa families and who

1. Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism*, London, 1924, p. 62.

are more interested in religion and philosophy than in secular affairs. The terms Brāhmaṇa and Śramaṇa are found in combination in the works of Pāṇini,[1] Patañjali,[2] Megasthenes[3] and also in the inscriptions of Aśoka.[4] According to Patañjali, the Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas belonged to rival groups. In the Buddhist texts *paribbājakā* and *tapassino* are generally referred to as Samaṇas. In the *Papañchasūdanī* an Ājīvika saint is described as a Samaṇa.[5] The Jainas and the Buddhists usually employ the term Samaṇa for all the non-Brāhmaṇa ascetics.

By the sixth century B.C., the dichotomy of the Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas, though not their mutual hostility, had become quite well-developed, which is reflected later in the *Indica* of Megasthenes, Aśokan epigraphs and Pali literature. Although in the *Mahābhāshya* (2.4.9) of Patañjali, the eternal hostility of the Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas—*yeshām śāśvatiko virodhaḥ* — is mentioned, nowhere in the Pali literature, where the dichnotomy finds frequent references, is such a mutual hostility expressed or suggested.[6] Though it is a fact that at several placs in the Piṭaka literature, Brāhmaṇa practices are criticized but the compound Samaṇa-Brāhmaṇa merely indicated two categories of spiritual teachers almost without any distinction. The dichotomy arose gradually in the Brāhmaṇa period. As pointed out by Pathak, the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* alludes to a controversy raging in contemporary times. It centred round the comparative importance of the two modes of living—(a) the pattern of life adopted by the celebate and ascetic wanderers, and (b) the settled life based on marriage and agriculture. Indra in the guise of a Brāhmaṇa exhorts Prince Rohita to constantly wander and in the process expounds the philosophy of wandering thus :

Glory of him who is *āśrānta*,
So have I heard O Rohita,
Evil is who stayeth among men,
Indra is the comrade of the wanderer.

He further exhorts Rohita :

The fortune for him who sitteth also sitteth,
But that of him who standeth standeth erect,

1. Agrawala, V. S., *India as Known to Pāṇini*, Lucknow, 1953, pp. 384-85.
2. *Ibid.*
3. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, Calcutta, 1926, p. 65.
4. *RE*, XIII; cf. *infra*, Ch. 10.
5. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
6. Pathak, V.S., his Preface in S. R. Goyal's *HIB* , pp. xxi-xxii.

That of him that reclineth lieth down,
The fortune of him that walketh shall move indeed.

We may also note the following verse uttered by Indra in the same strain :

Wandering one findeth honey,
Wandering the sweet Udumbara fruit,
Consider the pre-eminence of the sun,
Who wearieth never of wandering.

Against this philosophy of wandering Nārada expounds the philosophy of settled life, of rearing a family and performing sacrifices. Extolling the Sun, Nārada, in the legend of Śuṇahshepa, observes:

A debt he payeth in him,
And immortality he attaineth,
That father who sees the face
Of a son born living.

Depricating the ascetic and celibate practices Nārada adds :

The (son) is (a ship) well-found to ferry over,
What is the use of dirt, what of goat skin ?
What of long hair what of austerities ?
Seek a son O Brāhmaṇas.

"That the whole world is void for one who does not have a son" is the telling refrain of the argument advanced by Nārada. One may find here the evidence of a conflict between the traditional wandering life and the new life-pattern based on the emergent agriculture and permanent rural settlements. Concomitant with this change in economic structure is the tension between two value-systems envisaged through the nomadic life and the social life. The constant wanderer preoccupied with his struggle against nature, wanted to transcend the constraints and limitations of the worldly life with its manifold blemishes. Society was irrelevant to him, and, therefore it did not enter into his philosophical consideration. His primary concern was to cut asunder the worldly life through ascetic measures. For man in society, the primary values relate to social obligations and duties, that is, the repayment of three debts to ancestors, sages and the gods.[1]

The Śramaṇa was a wanderer *par excellence* moving with a gaṇa of fellow wanderers, discussing the ontological problems relating to the reality of the world and practising celebacy. The Brāhmaṇa, on the other hand, typified the householder performing social and religious duties. Hence, the dichotomy of Śramaṇa and

1. Pathak, *op.cit.*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

Brāhmaṇa.[1]

But the dichotomy between the Brāhmaṇas and the Śramaṇas, gradually became so sharp that Patañjali refers to it as synonymous with the relationship of the snake to the mongoose or of the cat to the rat.[2] The Brāhmaṇas were deeply embedded in the community and could not exist as a category outside it. The Saṅnyāsins deliberately opted out of society as is reflected in the Upanishads and the Āraṇyakas where their main intention was to think and act away from social obligations. Distance was further maintained by restricting the membership of such groups by and large to the upper castes.[3] The Śramaṇas—the Nirgranthas, Ājīvikas, Buddhists and other non-Vedic sectarian groups—in a sense preferred a middle course. At one level they renounced the society but at another level they returned to it and were dependent on the lay community.[4] In fact the Buddhist lay follower (*upāsaka*) played a major role in supporting the *saṅgha* and in return was ministered to by the *bhikkhus*. The need for an institutional base, the monastery, made the dependence on the lay community even greater and in this there was competition among the various new sects aswell as between them and the Brāhmaṇas. The antagonism was at the ideological level while competition was for patronage. The ire of most was directed against the Chārvākas and the Lokāyata sects since they mocked even the efficacy of monkhood.[5]

The attitude of the Brāhmaṇas and the Śramaṇas towards ascetic life was basically different. Their differences emanated from their general outlook towards social and moral problems. The early Vedic literature contains the first expressions of Indian moral consciousness. Here, we find emphasis on will, choice and action and on the necessity of directing them in accordance with the cosmic laws or Ṛta. The concept of Ṛta or Dharma gradually crystallized into three concrete socio-ethical orders—the varṇa organisation, the order of *āśramas* and the order of ritual observances, both *gṛhya* and *śrauta*.[6] Elsewhere, we have discussed how the varṇa organisation evolved and how the Vedic society, which originally recognised only the first two stages in the life of an individual, accepted the third stage of repairing to the forest as a result of the decline of the rituals

1. *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.
2. *Mahābhāshya*, I. 4.9; I, 476.
3. Thapar, Romila, *From Lineage to State*, Bombay, 1984, p. 152.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
6. Pande, G.C., *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 29.

and increase in the popularity of *upāsanā*.[1] The recognition to the fourth āśrama was given quite late and very grudgingly in order to accommodate those who had begun believing in the other-worldly pessimistic ideology of rebirth in accordance with one's *karmans* and whose number was gradually increasing. Similarly, earlier the Vedic society subscribed only to the *trivarga* doctrine—the doctrine that the goal of human life is to pursue *kāma* and *artha* in accordance with *dharma*. The addition of the concept of *moksha* as the highest goal of life to the doctrine of *trivarga* leading to the emergence of the doctrine of *chaturvarga* or *purushartha*, was obviously a development when the Upanishadic thinkers accepted the attainment of Brahma as the *summum bonum* of life.

Attitude to Social Obligations

However, from the practical point of view the notion of obligation of giving in response to what one has received from society and gods continued to constitute the key-stone in the arch of Vedic social ethics.[2] In contrast to this Śramaṇism cut man loose from the sense of dependence on gods and also struck a blow on the doctrine of social obligations. It replaced gods by the force of *karman* ; what man receives he does not owe to gods but to his past actions. Further, as man cannot avoid moral consequences of his actions, he must eschew egoism, violence, etc. which are, according to the Śramaṇic view, the main evils, and pursue morality. Hence, it is in the corpus of the monastic rules of various ascetic religions and sects that one can find concrete shape and form of their ideal of asceticism. These rules tended to regulate food, drink, clothes, dwelling, begging of alms and religious practices of monks down to the minutest details. Even for the lay-men and lay-women the ascetic sects formulated such rules though these were much less vigorous in nature. For example, the Jainas distinguished the *mahāvratas* of the monks from the *aṇuvratas* of the laity. Similarly, the *Sigālovādasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* of the Buddhists describes the *gihivinaya* or the disciplinary rules for the Buddhist laity. In the description of the duties of the householders the Śramaṇic sects laid comparatively greater emphasis on social obligations.

In the age of the Buddha and Mahāvīra all the Śramaṇa sects were organized under a leader as a gaṇa. "The leader—*gaṇī, satthā* — directed the followers in their conduct and instructed them in doctrine and also appointed his own successor. The Buddha made

1. *RHAI*, I, p. 129 ff.
2. Kane, P. V., *HD*, Vol. II, Pt. 2, pp. 942-46.

a great departure in this respect. He organized the *Saṅgha* as an impersonal, democratically organized body and instead of nominating a successor declared that the Dharma itself should govern the *Saṅgha*. The entry to the *Saṅgha* was governed by *Pravrajyā* which made the novice a *Śrāmaṇera* till he received the *Upasampadā* or confirmation. The novice to be ordained was required to fulfil the conditions of eligibility such as being at least fifteen years old, having the permission of the parents and having the requisite articles like the alms-bowl, the three robes etc. He was ordained by the *Triśaraṇa* formula and placed under an *Upādhyāya* or *Ācārya*. The relationship between the *Ācārya* and the *Antevāsika* or *Saddhavihārika* was patterned on that in the Brāhmaṇical school and this state of pupilage or training itself was called *Brahmacarya*. The monks in each locality met periodically to recite the *Prātimokṣa* and confess any transgression of which they might be guilty. Such assemblies were called *Uposathā*, a custom widely prevalent among the Śramaṇa sects. The Rain-retreat or *Varṣāvāsa* was another common custom. Among the Buddhists the *Varṣāvāsa* ended with the ceremony of the distribution of robes or *Kaṭhina* and a general confessional called *Pravāraṇā*. In course of time the Buddhist monks were allowed the use of a variety of goods in the monasteries. They were thus permitted robes (*pāvāra*), blankets (*kambala*), bathing clothes (*udaka-sāṭika*), towels and bags (*parikkhāracolaka*). They were permitted to accept not only invitation from the laity but also a wide variety of alms. They could use medicines also. Beginning with the meagre four *Nissayas*, Buddhist monasteries developed into elaborate set ups which had considerable property and several officials."[1]

The corpus of monastic rules sought to give a form and shape to the ideal of asceticism. These rules which regulated the food, drink, clothes, dwelling, begging of alms and religious practice of the bhikshus differed from sect to sect. The Brāhmaṇas permitted one to become a Saṅnyāsin only after he had passed through the other three preceding stages or āśramas which provided him the opportunity to clear of all his obligation to the society. Also, according to this theory, only a *dvija* could become a *parivrājaka*.[2] The Śramaṇas, on the other hand, generally did not give much consideration to age or caste. The Buddha maintained that just as after merging in the ocean the rivers lose their identity, in the same way a man, be he a Brāhmaṇa, Kshatriya, Vaiśya or Śūdra, who seeks refuge with his Order, forsakes

1. Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, pp. 46-47.
2. *Ibid.*

his former name, gotra or jāti.[1] The mendicants usually lived in forests and maintained the least possible contact with society, going to the villages and towns only for begging alms or when invited by the people. They wandered from one place to another. When once the Buddha remained at the same place during all the three seasons it caused a social resentment and denunciation. However, during rainy season the mendicants lived at one place. It was called the *Varshāvāsa. Varshāvāsa* (rain-retreat period) and *pravāraṇā* (notice of the end of *Varshāvāsa*) had become established customs. According to the *Mahāvagga*, the followers of each ascetic sect assembled together on the eighth, fourteenth and fifteenth day of the fortnight and indulged themselves in religious discourses to which the lay-devotees came to listen.[2] The ceremony was called Uposathā (*Upavasatha*) and had a significant place even in the Brāhmaṇical ritual. It was on the suggestion of Bimbisāra that it was introduced in the Buddhist saṅgha.

The ascetic sects usually had the same basic outlook towards non-injury, non-worldliness, etc. but differed from each other in respect of their clothes, food, alms-bowl and detailed rules of monastic life. They wore various types of clothes, while there were some who renounced all clothes and preferred to live nude. The Buddhist monks were granted the use of three clothes. Mahāvīra had renounced all clothes for himself but permitted his followers to wear one single robe owing to which they were called 'ekasāṭakas' by Gosāla. With regard to alms-bowl the Buddha permitted the use of those made of iron or clay. On the other hand, the Ājīvikas condemned the use of an alms-bowl and received their alms in hands. Rules regarding the nature of the acceptable food, too, varied from sect to sect. The Brāhmaṇa ascetics did not accept sweets and took only those parts of plants which became detached spontaneously. The Ājīvikas could accept cold water, unboiled seeds and specially prepared food but the Jainas forbade all these three. A Buddhist monk, however, could take anything received in alms but only once in a day and at the right time. Views differed also with regard to the acceptability of many other articles like torch, walking-stick, waterpot, etc.

Kammavāda and Kiriyāvāda

In the age of the Buddha *kammavāda* and *kiriyāvāda*, with their diametrical opposites *akammavāda* and *akiriyāvāda*, seem to have been the most discussed problems. Both the Jainas and the Buddhists

1. Mishra, G.S.P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 37.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

claim to have been believers in kammavāda and kiriyāvāda. According to B.C. Law, there is no difference between 'kriyāvāda' and 'karmavāda' and both denote the doctrine of action.[1] But it is more likely that some difference was maintained between the two terms.[2] Roughly these terms signified that the miseries of man are not caused by Time, Destiny, Chance or Soul but by his own actions, because human actions contain a binding moral force the results of which cannot be escaped. This doctrine was thus opposed to *Sassatavāda* (the doctrine that the ultimate reality is *śāśvata* or eternal) and *Adhichchasamuppāda* (the hypothesis of fortuitous origin) both leading to the conclusion that no action can be called moral or immoral, for either it does not occasion any change or it is not a free act. In the *Mahāvagga* Niganṭha Nāṭaputta calls the Buddha a believer in akiriyāvāda. Sometimes this passage is dismissed as having no import and occasioned only for the sake of accusation. But, as pointed out by G.S.P. Mishra, the accusation becomes clear if we take notice of the distinction between the conception and definition of action (*kiriyā* or *kamma*) put forward by the two. According to the Jainas, who stressed the physical nature of action, every action is bound to bring about a result which has a bearing on what a man becomes. For example, if a man commits an act of *himsā* it will necessarily procure sin for him. It is immaterial whether he does it knowingly or unknowingly. On the other hand, the Buddha emphasized the psychological aspect of human action. According to him, an action was no action unless it was accompanied by will and consciousness and, for that reason, man was not affected by the results of those actions which were not intentional. As the Jainas did not accept this position Niganṭha Nāṭaputta accused the Buddha of akiriyāvāda.[3]

Beside akiriyāvāda, *uchchhedavāda* was equally despised by the Buddhists and the Jainas. It was a materialistic-nihilistic approach towards ethical and cosmological problems. The fundamental point of this philosophy was that nothing but what is corporeal is real. Soul is not something distinct from the body and that there remains no soul, no life, no kamma after the disintegration of the bodily components. With death everything is annihilated (*uchchheda*). Thus, the believers in the Śramaṇic ideology differed radically from the philosophy of those who adhered to the Vedic world-view.

1. Law, B.C., *Indological Studies*, II, p. 285.
2. Mishra, *op.cit.*, p. 55.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

Chapter 5

Ājīvikas and Other Non-Jaina Non-Buddhist Śramaṇa Sects of the Early Buddhist Age

The non-Buddhist non-Jaina Śramaṇa religious bodies are known to us only through references to their teachers and tenets scattered in the vast literatures of the Buddhists and the Jainas. The *Vinaya* refers to Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta with whom the Buddha had personal contact before his Enlightenment. From the *Vinaya* it appears that the famous teachers of north-eastern India were called *titthiyas*. This term originally did not belong to any particular sect, though the Buddha sometimes used it in the sense of heretics. The religious teachers whom the Buddha described as heretic (*titthiya-tīrthakara*) are : Pūraṇa Kassapa, Pakudha Kachchāyana, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta and Niganṭha Nāṭaputta. The *Chullavagga* contains an account of a supernormal magical show by Piṇḍola Bharadvāja with regard to a sandalwood alms-bowl which a śreshṭhī of Rājagṛha got fixed on the top of a bamboo pole declaring that it will be his who could take it from there with his supernatural powers. Among those who claimed such powers but were proved unsuccessful were Makkhali Gosāla, Pūraṇa Kassapa Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kachchāyana and Niganṭha Nāṭaputta. Their doctrines very probably did not last long, except those of the Jainas and Ājīvikas.

Makkhali Gosāla : The Ājīvika Sect

Of the five prominent non-Buddhist non-Jaina heretical sects which arose in or before the sixth century B.C., one alone, Ājīvika,[1] enjoyed a long history of about two thousand years before it became extinct. It was probably founded by Nanda Vachchha and was headed by Kisa Saṁkichcha after him. It acquired strength under Makkhali Gosāla who was a contemporary of the Buddha and Mahāvīra. The

1. The word is spelt as 'Ājīvaka' also. Cf. the term *Samyagājīva* of the Buddhists. For the etymology of the term cf. Basham, A.L., *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, Delhi, 1981, pp. 103-04. He has discussed the views of Lassen, Burno and Hoernle also. Also see Barua, B. M., *Ājīvikas*, Calcutta, 1920, p. 11.

cult spread at one time from Avanti to Aṅga. Though both Jainism and Buddhism denounced Gosāla and his teachings, they quietly absorbed some of the tenets and practices of his school. The *Sāmaññaphalasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* mentions Makkhali Gosāla as one of the six teachers each of whom was the leader of an order (*gaṇāchāriyo*), the founder of a sect (*titthakāro*), revered as a saint (*sādhu sammato*) and a homeless wanderer of long standing (*chira pabbajito*).

Gosāla is said to have born somewhere near Śrāvastī. He left home for some unknown reason and became a homeless wanderer. His career as a wanderer covered about 24 years. He spent first six[1] of these with Mahāvīra at Paṇiyabhūmi. At that time the latter was a follower of Pārśvanātha school. He parted company with Mahāvīra on account of doctrinal differences and went to Śrāvastī where he attained Jinahood and became the leader of the Ājīvika sect. He is said to have expired sixteen years before Mahāvīra. In the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, he is stated to have been a disciple of Mahāvīra at Nālandā, but it is highly unlikely.

The name of this teacher is found in various forms : Makkhali Gosāla in Pāli, Maṅkhaliputta Gosāla in Ardha Māgadhī, Markali in Tamil and Maskarin in Sanskrit. The Chinese tradition records his name as Maskari Gosāliputra and explains that Maskari was his gotra name and Gosāli was his mother's name. According to Pāṇini,[2] *maskarin* was a wanderer who carried a *maskara* (bamboo staff) with him. Many other fanciful derivations of the name are suggested in ancient literature.[3]

Hoernle remarks that the name 'Ājīvika' was given to the followers of this sect by their opponents. By his conduct Gosāla laid himself open to the charge that he practised religious mendicancy not as a means of gaining salvation (*moksha*), but as a means of gaining livelihood. The Buddha is said to have denounced Gosāla as one of those who lived in inconsistency (*abrahmacharyāvāsa*) and as a bad man (*mogha purisha*). Rhys Davids opines that Ājīvikas were those who claimed to be strict in earning their means of livelihood. According to Charpentier, Gosāla's father Makkhali was a mendicant bearing a picture board with the representation of Śiva. It is likely that the Ājīvikas earned their bread by showing pictures and not by

1. According to the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* six years, but according to the *Kalpa Sūtra* only one year. See Barua, *Ājīvikas*, p.7.

2. VI. 1. 154.

3. Cf. *The Cultural Heritage of India (CHI)*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 393-94.

mere begging. That astrology was almost a profession with the Ājīvikas is proved by an old tradition preserved in a Jātaka and the *Divyāvadāna*. This tradition agrees also with their belief in fatalism.

No trace of Ājīvika texts has been preserved, but scattered quotations from them are found in the Buddhist and Jaina literatures. From the tradition preserved in the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, it may be presumed that the scriptures of the Ājīvikas consisted of ten *Puvvas* (eight Mahānimittas and two Maggas) like the fourteen *Pūrvas* of the Jainas.[1] The dialect adopted as the literary medium for their scriptures was closely allied to Ardha-Māgadhī. The South Indian tradition mentions as their scripture a text called the *Navakadir* (=Nine Rays; a collection of nine works?) which most likely embodied the teachings of Maskarin. This was probably a Tamil version of an original Prakrit work. An idea of the Ājīvika philosophy may also be formed with the help of the scattered references found in these and other texts.[2]

The *Bhagavatī Sūtra* gives the following account of the philosophy of Gosāla. Once an experiment was made by Gosāla together with Mahāvīra with a sesamum plant which being uprooted and destroyed reappeared in due time. From this Gosāla concluded that beings were subject to re-animation (*paūṭṭa parihāraṁ parihanti*) and not to death and destruction. He added to it the doctrine that all beings were subject to a fixed series of existence from the lowliest to the highest and this series was unchangeable (*niyati saṅgatibhāva*) and every existence had its own unalterable characteristic as heat is of fire or coldness of ice. According to the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, he held that all beings and souls are without force, power and energy of their own. They get transformed by their fate (*niyati*), by the necessary conditions of the class to which they belong (*saṅgati*), and by their individual nature (*bhāva-pariṇatā*). They experience pleasure and pain according to their position in one or other of the six classes of existences. All those who reach the final beatitude will have to pass through 84,00,000 great kalpas, and then seven births as a deity, seven as a bulky (insensible) being, seven as a sensible being, and seven with chânges of body through re-animation.[3]

Makkhali Gosāla denied the effect of deeds (*karman*) and energy (*vīrya*). He upheld fatalism of extreme type. He maintained that human effort is useless (*n'atthi purisakāre*), that a being is totally

1. Barua, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 47-51.

2. For Ājīvika doctrines see Hoernle in *ERE*, I; Barua, *A History of Pre-Buddhistic Indian Philosophy*, Calcutta, 1925, Ch. XXI; Basham, *op. cit.*

3. *CHI*, I, pp. 395-96.

helpless; he can neither help himself nor others and nor he can attain perfection (*vimutti*) by his efforts. He must transmigrate from one existence to another, and it is only after repeated existences that he attains emancipation (*suddhi*). The consecutive existences of a being including the periods and types of existences are unalterably fixed (*niyata*). The several existences of a being may be compared to a ball of yarn uncoiling itself, the ultimate end of the yarn being *suddhi* or *vimutti* or the end of existence of a being.[1] That is why Ajātaśatru is said to have characterized this philosophy as *saṁsāravisuddhi*, which, according to G. C. Pande, is a very just characterization.[2]

According to the Ājīvikas, there are eight kinds of results determinable at the stage of embryo : acquisition, loss, obstruction by impediments, migration to other place, suffering misery, enjoying pleasure, losing what is obtained, and birth and death. The *Bhagavatī Sūtra* mentions only six of them omitting the third and the fourth.

From the Tamil texts we learn that the Ājīvikas believed in five kinds of atoms : earth, water, fire, air, and life. Of these only life is endowed with knowledge, others are not. They are beginningless, eternal, and indivisible. They can severally assemble together and assume varied forms such as mountain, bamboo, diamond, etc. Only a man of divine vision can perceive single atoms. The life-atom, which is imperceptible, becomes embodied through its own *karman* ; when it enters a body, it takes all the qualities of the body as its own.[3]

According to the *Maṇimekalai* (4th cent. A.D.), the Ājīvikas believed that there are six classes of beings—black, blue-black, green, red, yellow, and white. The final stage is Release (*vīḍu*), which is extremely white.[4] Buddhaghosha has made an attempt to explain in detail the various stages of existence envisaged in Gosāla's doctrines.[5] In the Jaina literature also the various states of existence distinguished by colour as black, dark, blue, green, red, golden and white have been dealt with in connection with the doctrines of the Ājīvikas. The distinctions made by colour, though not intelligible now, must have been a prominent feature of the philosophy of this sect.[6]

There are two kinds of released persons, *sambodhakas* and

1. Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, Calcutta, 1941, p. 29.
2. Pande, G. C., *Origins*, pp. 342-43.
3. *CHI*, I, p. 396.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, pp. 161-64.
6. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

maṇḍalas. The former always remain in the highest stage of life, while the latter come down to the earth to impart sacred knowledge to the world. In case all jīvas attain moksha, the spring of saṁsāra will dry up, so the Ājīvikas propounded the theory of *maṇḍala-moksha* according to which the jīvas that have attained *moksha* may come to saṁsāra in order to keep the latter moving.[1]

In the Jaina *Bhagavatī Sūtra* a reference is made to the fact that the Ājīvikas had shifted their centre of activities to the Puṇḍra country at the foot of the Vindhya mountains, and that in their pantheon were included many Vedic and non-Vedic gods. The worshippers of two of these, Puṇṇabhadda (Pūrṇabhadra) and Maṇibhadda (Maṇibhadra) are referred to in the Buddhist *Niddesa* also. Though Maṇibhadda and Puṇṇabhadda have been regarded as Yakshas by modern writers, but there is no doubt that the *Niddesa* distinguished them from the latter class of supernatural beings. The Pawaya inscription (1st cent. B.C.) on the pedestal of a statue, shows that a class of Maṇibhadra-bhaktas existed at one time and that Maṇibhadra was given the usual honorific title of *Bhagavat*.[2]

It is generally believed that the Ājīvikas adhered to a severe form of asceticism. Gosāla's reputation for asceticism is shown by several Jātaka stories and the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*[3] and other texts. During initiation the Ājīvikas remained nude and pulled out their hair (though they were not always tonsured).[4] The early Buddhist texts at several places refer to the fact that the Ājīvika monks lived naked.[5] They had lay-devotees as well. The *Nīlakeśī*, a Tamil Jaina text, states that Gosāla exhorted his disciples to abide by strict moral observances, and that they observed *śīlas* though they denied their efficacy. According to another South Indian text, the Ājīvikas worshipped the aśoka tree as god, denied the authority of the Vedas, practised severe asceticism, kept their body dirty (for want of daily bathing), gave up household life, covered their nakedness with mat-clothing, and carried in their hand a bunch of peacock feathers.[6] The *Bhagavatī Sūtra* says that they abstained from eating five kinds of fruits and also from eating roots, etc.[7] The *Sthāṇāṅga Sūtra* also

1. *CHI*, I, pp. 396-97.

2. Cf. Bhattacharya, H. D., in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, Bombay, 1953, pp. 463-64.

3. Chakraborti, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, pp. 452-55.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 453-54.

5. Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, pp. 52-53.

6. *CHI*, I, pp. 394-95.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 395.

describes the various kinds of austerities practised by the Ājīvikas. People of all castes and also women were allowed to enter the Ājīvika order. The *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, however, states that in the opinion of Gosāla no spiritual development can take place by moral observances. It is rather difficult to make out why the Ājīvikas should enjoin the moral observances and in the same breath deny their efficacy. According to N. K. Sastri, it is likely that following the time-honoured fashion Gosāla approved the pursuance of the moral and religious observances, even though in his opinion they were ineffective in doing any good.

It is not unlikely that the term '*niyati*' was introduced into Indian thought by the Ājīvikas. Manu and the compiler of the *Hitopadeśa* tried to disabuse the minds of the people of this faith in fatalism, though Bhartṛhari praised it in his *Nītiśataka*.

Pūraṇa Kassapa

According to the Buddhist texts, Pūraṇa Kassapa (Pūrṇa Kāśyapa) was a respectable teacher and leader of a religious sect (tīrthakara). He was, most probably, born in a Brāhmaṇa family, as his surname suggests. His name Pūraṇa (=Pūrṇa) also indicates that he was regarded as fully enlightened and perfect in wisdom. It is said that when Ājātaśatru, the king of Magadha, once visited him, Pūraṇa expounded his views thus: "To him who acts or causes another to act, mutilates or causes another to mutilate, punishes or causes another to punish, causes grief or torment, trembles or causes another to tremble, kills other creatures, takes what is not given, breaks into houses, commits dacoity or robbery or tells lies, to him thus acting, there is no guilt... no increase of guilt would ensue...In giving alms, in offering sacrifices, in self-mastery, in control of senses, and in speaking truth, there is neither merit nor increase of merit."[1] Thus, Pūraṇa appears to have been an amoralist believing that a person neither earns merit by pious acts such as gifts, sacrifices, or by abstinence from evil acts, and nor demerit by killing, stealing, adultery or speaking falsehood. It may mean just *akiriyā* ('one never really acts') or that the body enjoys or suffers according to its deeds but not the soul; one might do whatever one pleases without bcoming sinful or virtuous.[2] The Jaina Sūtras also attribute no-action theory to Pūraṇa. However, according to Aiyaswami Sastri, this probably does not represent the correct view of Kassapa, for no system of thought in

1. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha* (Sacred Books of the Buddhists), I, London, 1899, pp. 69-70.

2. Pande, *Origins*, p. 347.

India, except the materialistic Chārvāka, is known to deny any merit or demerit to actions.[1] According to Barua, Pūraṇa was an advocate of the theory that the soul was passive (*nishkriya*) and no action could affect it, and it was beyond good and bad.[2] Śīlāṅka, a Jaina commentator, identifies the doctrine of Akārakavāda with the Sāṅkhya view.[3] But, as pointed out by N. Dutt, neither Sāṅkhya and nor Vedānta teaches non-existence of karmāic effects. It is the body or Prakṛti which functions and reaps the fruits of its deeds in this life and in future existences. Further, neither of these two schools denies Saṁsāravāda; hence, they could not have fully supported Pūraṇa Kassapa's view.[4]

Pūraṇa Kassapa was a supporter of *ahetuvāda* (no-cause theory) also. In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*[5] the Buddha states that no *hetu* (*cause*) *and no pachchaya* (condition) are accepted by Pūraṇa Kassapa for one's becoming either defiled or purified. Abhaya also reports that Kassapa accepted no cause for *ñāṇa* (knowledge) and *dassana* (insight).[6] Hence, Barua believes that Pūraṇa was a supporter of *adhichchasamuppāda* (fortuitous origin) or *ahetuvāda* referred to in the *Brahmajālasutta*.[7]

In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, two Lokāyatika Brāhmaṇas state to the Buddha that Pūraṇa Kassapa claimed to be always in possession of *ñāṇadassana* (introspective knowledge), while walking or staying etc., and that he perceived the finite world through infinite knowledge (*anantena ñāṇena antavantaṁ lokaṁ jānam*), while they attribute to the Jainas the theory of perceiving the finite world through finite knowledge.[8] Elsewhere, the Buddha describes Kassapa as possessing the power of telling that a particular dead person was reborn at a certain place.[9]

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1. *CHI*, I, p. 390.
2. Barua, *op.cit.*, p. 279.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Dutt, *op.cit.*, pp. 28-29.
5. *CHI*, I, p. 391.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.* Contra G. C. Pande (*Origins*, p. 348) who remarks, "the assumption of Dr. Barua about Adhiccasamuppāda is false, since the Sāṅkhya thinkers were not disbelievers in causality. ... Events may have nothing to do with 'soul' and yet may not be fortuitous in origin."
8. *CHI*, I, *op. cit.*
9. *Ibid.* Ānanda, the disciple of the Buddha, wrongly ascribes to Pūraṇa Kassapa Makkhali Gosāla's doctrine of six classes of human beings probably because Gosāla also had the title Pūraṇa (*CHI*, I, p. 391, n. 12).

Pakudha Kachchāyana

According to the Buddhist texts, Pakudha Kachchāyana (Prakruddha Kātyāyana) was one of the six heretic teachers (*titthiyas*). He was also a leader of some religious body. Buddhaghosha informs that Pakudha was his personal name and Kachchāyana his family (*gotra*) name. The term '*pakudha*' has been traditionally interpreted as *prakruddha* or *kakudha* which mean the same thing. Assuming Kakuda to be the original and correct form meaning 'a man having a hump on his back', Barua connects Pakudha Kātyāyana with Kabandhī Kātyāyana, one of the pupils of Pippalāda of the *Praśna Upanishad*.[1] But Kabandhī Kātyāyana is described as a *Brahmanishṭha* in the Upanishad. Buddhaghosha records that Kachchāyana never touched cold water. He never even crossed the river or a marshy pathway, lest his vow should be transgressed.[2]

The philosophical ideas of Kachchāyana are known from the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* and the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*. The *Sāmaññaphalasutta* represents him as a pluralist and a semi-materialist. He believed that a being is composed of seven elements (*kāya*) existing immutably in emptiness (*vivara*)— earth, water, air, fire, pleasure (*sukha*), pain (*dukkha*) and soul (*jīva*). These seven elements are neither created nor moulded. They are barren and fixed as a rock and do not produce anything and do not interact on one another. They neither move nor change nor hinder one another so as to cause pain or pleasure or indifference. Hence, there is neither killer nor instigator of killing, neither hearer nor preacher, neither learner nor teacher. If a sword passes through the body of a being, it does not destroy it; it only slips through the interval between the elements forming the body.[3] According to G. C. Pande, the concept of *vivara* was used to explain apparent motion, but it was not regarded as a substance; it was understood as mere 'non-resistance' hypostatized.[4]

The *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, on the other hand, presents *Ātmashashṭha-vāda* (which resembles the doctrines of Pakudha) as a system of six categories omitting pleasure and pain and adding ether or space (*ākāśa*) in their place.[5] Buddha criticised the doctrine of Pakudha as a kind of Eternalism (*Sassatavāda*) and Annilhilationism

1. Barua, *op. cit.*, p. 227.
2. Quoted in *CHI*, I, p. 392.
3. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I, p. 74.
4. Pande, *Origins*, p. 348.
5. *Ibid.*

(*Uchchhedavāda*).[1] As pointed out by H. Ui, if this Sassatavāda (Eternalism) is developed, "the resultant must be the atomic theory." Hence, it is likely that this Sassatavāda is the same as Aṇuvāda (atom-theory).[2] According to Barua also, Pakudha was Empedocles of India for, according to both, the four elements are root-things and the form-ative principle is two-fold; 'love' and 'hatred' for Empedocles, and 'pleasure' and 'pain' for Kātyāyana.[3]

Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta

Sañjaya, son of Belaṭṭhi or Vairāṭi, was another religious leader of the sixth century B.C. He was probably an elder contemporary of the Buddha. He is said to have presided over a band of 250 disciples. He is probably identical with Parivrājaka Sañjaya, the teacher of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, who joined the Buddhist saṅgha alongwith his other disciples impressed as they were by Buddha's doctrine of causation (*Pratītyasamutpāda*).[4] Parivrājaka Suppiya was another follower of Sañjaya. Sañjaya is famous for the view which was scepticism on the one hand and a primitive stage of criticism of knowledge on the other, like that of some of the Sophists of the Greek philosophy. He is generally described as an agnostic (*ajñānavādī*), a sceptic unwilling to give any definite answer to the problems of the other world, the Opapātika beings, the law of kamma, etc. which were, according to him, indeterminable. This position is similar to the Buddha's doctrine that problems such as 'whether the soul is identical with body or not', 'whether an emancipated being exists after death or not', etc. are indeterminable (*avyākata*) and should be left aside. But unlike the Buddhists, Sañjaya carried the argument further when he refused to give any answer to the problem of responsibility. In the *Brahmajālasutta*[5] a follower of Sañjaya is described as *Amarāvikhepika* (evasive disputant), that is a person who, when asked a question, would equivocate and wriggle out like an eel. According to Barua, the Aviruddhakas mentioned in the

1. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

2. Quoted in *CHI*, I, p. 392.

3. Barua, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-84.

4. Jacobi supposes that the *Mahāvagga* 1.23 and 24 refer to agnostic Sañjaya (*SBE*, 45, p. xxix). According to this text, when Sāriputta and Mogallāna went to Sañjaya and told him of their decision to become the followers of the Buddha, he tried to prevent them by offering a temptation of combined leadership over his Church. However, he was unsuccessful and the consequent grief caused him blood vomits.

5. *CHI*, I, p. 399.

Aṅguttara Nikāya were also the followers of Sañjaya; they were called Amarāvikkhepikas for their philosophical doctrines have not described them as Akiriyavādin (non-believer in karmāic effects).[1] In the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, the agnostics are criticised as blind men: If they cannot reach the Truth themselves how can they lead others to it ?

Ajita Kesakambalin and Anti-Vedism and Materialism of the Chārvākas

Among some non-Vedic thinkers of the period materialistic nihilism was popular. Ajita Kesakambalin was one of them. He was one of the six non-Brāhmaṇical teachers mentioned in the early Buddhist and Jaina texts. He was held in great honour by the people. He was called Kesakambalin because he put on a blanket of human hair. In the *Mahāvagga* the Buddha forbids his own disciples to wear *kesakambala* because it was a garment worn by the heretics.

Ajita believed that a human being is made of four elements (*chātummahābhūtiko ayaṁ puriso*). When he dies, the earthy in him relapses to earth, the fluid to water, the heat to fire, the windy to air and his faculties (*indriyāṇī*, that is the five senses and the mind) to space (*ākāśa*). Ajita denied the existence of after-life. It is the fools who speak of the existence (of the soul, etc.). A person's earthly existence ends on the funeral pyre. When the body dies, both the foolish and the wise perish alike. Nothing survives after death (*bhasmībhūtasya punarāgamana kutaḥ*).[2]

The ethical and religious teachings of Ajita were corollaries to his radical materialism. He believed that there is no merit in sacrifice or offerings. No fruit results from good and evil deeds. No benefit results from the service rendered to mother and father. There is no demerit if one commits evil deeds. He believed that no one has reached perfection by following the right path, and there is none who, as a result of knowledge, has experienced this world as well as the next.[3]

This doctrine of Ajita is clearly related with Bārhaspatya school of thought, founded by Bṛhaspati. The Bārhaspatya school is also called 'Chārvāka' in the *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha* of Mādhava and 'Lokāyata' in the *Shaḍdarśana-samuchchaya* of Haribhadra. Whether 'Chārvāka' was a personal name or epithet, it is difficult to say. It is certain, however, that the doctrines of this school were a complete

1. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
2. *CHI*, I, p. 398; Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
3. *Ibid.*

denunciation of the Vedas, their authors and the relgion they teach. Thus, it is said that the Vedas are the works of men-cheats, hypocrites and flesh-eaters and that their language is utterly gibberish. Reference is also made to certain unclean customs connected with the horse-sacrifice.[1]

The Chārvākas sought to propagate that one should seek his own happiness by whatever means he can in this life. The performance of acts that are supposed to bring fruits in the next life is an exercise in futility. As everything ends with death, there is no point in performing sacrifices and other supposedly moral acts. This doctrine was vehemently criticised by the Buddha as *uchchhedavāda* or annihilationism, that is the doctrine that a being disappears for ever after death with the dissolution of his body. A somewhat similar account of the *nāstikas* or Chārvākas is given in the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* in which it is stated that the five gross elements produce Ātman. On the dissolution of the elements, the living beings cease to exist. 'There is neither virtue nor vice, there is no world beyond.'[2]

Dhīshaṇa, to whom is attributed this type of doctrine in the *Padma Purāṇa*, asserts that there is no God. The variegated world exists by itself. However, unlike Ajita he admitted only four elements and not the fifth, ākāśa.[3]

The Lokāyata or Lokāyatika was not unknown to the Buddhist authors also. The following conversation between a Lokāyatika Brāhmaṇa and the Buddha has been recorded in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* :[4]

The Brāhmaṇa	:	Does everything exist (*sabbaṁ atthi*) ?
The Buddha	:	To say that everything exists is the first view of the worldling (*lokāyataṁ*).
The Brāhmaṇa	:	Does not everything exist (*sabbaṁ na'tthi*)?
The Buddha	:	To say so is the second view of the worldling.
The Brāhmaṇa	:	Is everything one and identical (*sabbaṁ ekattaṁ*)?
The Buddha	:	To say so is the third view of the worldling.
The Brāhmaṇa	:	Is everything separate (*sabbaṁ puthuttaṁ*)?

1. *Ibid.*
2. Dutt, *op. cit.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*

The Buddha : To say so is the fourth view of the worldling.

Therefore, the Buddha preached the doctrine of *Pratītyasamutpāda* (i.e. the law of causation) avoiding the above extremes.

It is to be noted here that Ajita had postulated no solution for the phenomenon of knowledge. The Chārvākas, however, attempted to solve it in this way: when the four elements constitute the body, the spirit (*chaitanya*) comes into existence automatically as liquor is produced by fermentation of rice and molasses. The Chārvākas, therefore, believed that perception is the only source of knowledge. That which cannot be perceived by the senses, does not exist. But this is too gross a proposition to stand scrutiny. As pointed out by the critics of this philosophy, when a Chārvāka goes out of his home on any occasion, his wife does not see him for a time. Does it mean that she becomes a widow during this period ?

Pāyāsi-Paësi was probably another materialist thinker of the age of the Buddha, though his chronological position is somewhat doubtful.[1] He also disbelieved in soul and agreed with Ajita in denying that anything real could correspond to 'the current transcendental ideas'.[2]

1. Pande, *Origins*, p. 351.
2. *Ibid.*

Chapter 6

Jaina Śramaṇism Before Mahāvīra

Jainism is so called because it incorporates the teachings of the Jinas. In the age of Mahāvīra (6th cent. B.C.) Jainism was known as Niganṭha Dhamma (Nirgranthism). It was called as such because it laid great stress on non-possession and on renunciation of the house (*āgāra* or *gṛha*) which was considered a knot (*granthī* or *grantha*). It was also known by the general name Śramaṇa dharma (Śramaṇism), a term which, as we have seen (Ch.5), was usually applied to other-worldly non-Brāhmaṇical sects. It believed that the conquest of the evil tendencies of attachment and hatred was the real end of one's life. As the promulgators of this ideal were regarded as Jinas (victors), their followers were given the name Jaina and their religion came to be known as Jainism.[1] The Jina is a 'conqueror', not of territories, but a 'spiritual conqueror' of passions and external obstacles which block his path to perfect knowledge (*kaivalyam*). He is also called an Arhat, 'one worthy of honor' (an epithet also used for the Buddha), as well as a Tīrthaṅkara, 'a builder of the ford' which leads across the river of life. Jina and Tīrthaṅkara are typically Jaina terms, just as Buddha, Śākyamuni and Tathāgata are Buddhist. Thus, it is from the word Jina that the derivative 'Jaina' comes, meaning 'a follower of the Jina'. Thus, Jainism is that path which the Jinas have taught, just as the term Buddhism denotes the doctrines taught by the Buddha.

But a Jina or Tīrthaṅkara (quite unlike the Buddha) is not regarded as the founder of a new religion; he is rather the propagator of truth and of a path taught in the same manner by all the previous teachers for the benefit of the succeeding generations.

Life-Pattern of the Jinas

According to the Jaina belief, twenty-four Jinas propagate their

1. See Jacobi, Intro. to SBE, 45; Acharya, Shri Tulasi, *Pre-Vedic Existence of Śramaṇa Tradition*, Calcutta, 1964; Jain, R.C., 'The Pre-Aryan Shramanic Spiritualism', *Muni Hazarimal Smriti Grantha*, Beawar, 1965, pp. 12-26; Mehta, M. L., 'Antiquity of Jaina Culture', *Munishrī Mishrīmalji Mahārāja Abhinandana Grantha*, Jodhpur, 1968, pp. 1-9.

teachings during each half-cycle of time, comprising a period of progress (*utsarpiṇī*) and one of decline (*avasarpiṇī*). Despite their extraordinary longevity they are all human teachers who appear in succession in Jambudvīpa, i.e. India. They are separated by vast spans of time and, strangely, are generally, unaware of each other's existence. The lives and legends of the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras were described by many distinguished Jaina writers in the post-canonical period (c. after 3rd century B.C.). The *Trishashṭi-śalākā-purusha-charitra* or *The Lives of Sixty-Three Illustrious Persons* of Hemachandra (1088-1172 A.D.),[1] a twelfth-century work from Gujarat, is perhaps the greatest example of this genre. Though it treats the sixty-three traditional Jaina heroes, it is mostly devoted to the lives and legends of the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras. However, it seems that the majority of the Jinas are mythical or even fictitious, for the details of the life of each Jina are essentially and stereotypically the same. Usually they follow a 'life-pattern' which is shared by them as a class. According to J.P. Sharma, an analysis of Hemachandra's account of the lives of the twenty-four Tīthaṅkaras reveal fourteen major components that characterize such a life-pattern, though there were some deviations from this pattern also as one finds in the case of Mallī.[2]

According to J. P. Sharma, the archetypal life-pattern of the Jinas may be briefly summarized as follows :

1. The Jinas had previous lives (i.e. were *Jinasattvas*, or future or potential Jinas, comparable to the Bodhisattvas who appeared before the Buddha).
2. They were former gods.
3. Their mothers saw fourteen great dreams at the time of their conception.
4. They had Kshatriya births.
5. Great fuss was made of their name-giving ceremonies.
6. Deities participated in their sacraments (*saṁskāras*).
7. They had to exhaust or burn out their pleasure-karmas through marriage, sensual pleasures, children, and rulership before renunciation.
8. In the course of their pleasurable existence they became disgusted with the world and renounced it.

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1. Hemachandra, *Trishashṭi-Śalākā-Purusha Charitra*, trans. by Helen M. Johnson, G.O.S., Baroda, 6 vols., 1931-62, Vol. IV, 1954.

2. Sharma, J.P., 'The Life-Pattern of the Jinas', *Biography : East and West International Conference*, Honolulu, April 28-30, 1980.

9. They took initiation and practised severe austerities.
10. They took fasting and broke their fasts usually with noble hosts.
11. They attained Jinahood and delivered a significant discourse.
12. They had their own guardian angels (*śāsana-devatās*)
13. They had a varying number of chief disciples (Gaṇadharas) and founded communities (*Jaina-Saṅghas*).
14. With empty stomachs and purified souls (*jīvas*) they attained liberation, called *kaivalyam*, in an ideal manner by fasting unto death (*sallekhanā*).[1]

This archetypal life-pattern of Jinas is used in the case of most of the Tīrthaṅkaras by the later Jaina writers. It makes their historicity extremely nebulous and doubtful and no relationship between any two of them can be established. Therefore modern scholars generally believe that though Śramaṇa tradition was a reality in the Vedic age it could not have acquired a definite shape and no systematic tradition of the Jinas or Tīrthaṅkaras could have existed. It seems that the great Śramaṇas of the Vedic age who flourished in different regions and at different times, and whose world-view was only broadly similar, were sought to be made historical figures by the later Jaina writers who concocted a set life-pattern for most of them. But the very nature of this set life-pattern proves their unhistorical character.

However, it does not mean that everything said about all the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras by the later Jaina writers is fictitious. There is, in all probability, some germs of truth in the case of the first Tīrthaṅkara, Ṛshabhadeva, and some later Tīrthaṅkaras as well. The historicity of Mahāvīra is undoubted. Pārśvanātha also seems to be a historical figure. The personality of Neminātha, said to be a contemporary of Kṛshṇa may also contain some memory of actual events. About Mallī one can only say that the belief that she was a female imparts his historicity a slight touch of reliability because there could not have been any necessity to imagine that one of the Jinas, out of 24, was a female. But beyond this everything about them is more or less a matter of the Jaina faith and the impossible details of their life-histories render it difficult to treat them as historical.

1. Sharma, J.P., 'Mallī : The Jina Extraordinaire of Jainism', in *Śrīrāmā-bhinandanam (Reconstructing Indian History for S.R. Goyal)*, in 4 vols., Vol. II, ed. by Shankar Goyal, Jaipur, 2003, pp. 435-44.

Ṛshabhadeva or Ādinātha : The First Tīrthaṅkara

The *Kalpasūtra* of Bhadrabāhu gives us the life-history of each Tīrthaṅkara or Jina.[1] Ṛshabhadeva or Ādinātha stands first in this list. He is mentioned even in the *Vishṇu* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇas* as a great saint-king belonging to a very remote past. The *Bhāgavata P.* speaks of the royal sage Ṛshabha who became an avadhūta and in this context mentions Vātaraśana śramaṇas and uses the designation *keśa-bhaūri-bhāraḥ* for Ṛshabha.[2] Further, in the *RV* itself there are found traces of the existence of religious thinkers known as Munis and Śramaṇas who may be regarded as the precursors of the Jaina faith (*supra*, Ch. 3). The Keśī-sūkta specifically mentions *munayo vātaraśanāḥ*. H. L. Jain and Acharya Tulasi even claim to have found a mention of Ṛshabhadeva in the *RV*.[3] According to the later tradition, he was a son of Marudevī and Nabhi, respectively queen and king of Kosala. After deep and long meditation he received *Kevala-jñana* or the highest knowledge. He is said to have led a community of 84,000 śramaṇas, 300,000 nuns and other lay-devotees. He renounced his kingdom in favour of his sons and embraced the life of an ascetic.

Mallī : A Female Tīrthaṅkara

According to the Jaina tradition, Ādinātha or Ṛshabhadeva was followed by Ajitanātha, Sambhavanātha, Abhinandananātha, Sumatinātha, Padmaprabha, Supārśvanātha, Chandraprabha, Suvidhinātha, Śītalanātha, Śreyāṁśanātha, Vāsupūjya, Vimalanātha, Anantanātha, Dharmanātha, Śāntinātha, Kunthunātha and Aranātha. However, their life-histories follow the set pattern adopted by the Jaina writers. But the life of Mallīnātha, the nineteenth Tīrthaṅkara followed a unique pattern. Therefore, it may be outlined in some detail if only for its uniqueness and the light it throws on the role of a female Tīrthaṅkara in Jaina Śramaṇahood.

Like the other Jinas, Mallī had two previous lives as a Jina-sattva; one as Prince Mahābala, and the other as a god in Vaijayanta heaven. The description by Hemachandra of the life of prince Mahābala may be summarised as follows :[4]

Mahābala Mallī was the son of king Bala who ruled over the West Videha. His wife, Queen Dhāriṇī, saw a lion in a dream and subsequently gave birth to a son named Mahābala or 'Great Prowess'.

1. SBE, XXII.

2. Pande, G.C., *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 3.

3. Sharma, J.P., 'Mallī : The Jina Extraordinaire of Jainism', *op. cit.*, p. 437.

4. Acharya Tulasi points out that in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* Śramaṇas have been described as a Vātaraśana and Ūrdhvamanthī.

As a youth Mahābala married five hundred princesses, among whom was included Kamalaśrī (Lotus-Beauty). He also had six close childhood friends named Achala, Dharaṇa, Purāṇa, Vasu, Vaiśravaṇa and Abhichandra. After listening to a religious discourse of the Jaina munis one day his father king Bala became disgusted with life, handed the kingdom over to Mahābala and became a mendicant.

While Mahābala was the king, his wife Kamalaśrī also saw a lion in her dream and gave birth to a son named Balabhadra. In course of time, king Mahābala also listened to a discourse on 'the religion of the Arhats' in the company of his six friends. Consequently, after installing his son on the throne he became a religious mendicant, alongwith his six friends. These seven noble men made a pact among themselves that all of them would undertake the same austerities for their spiritual advancement. Then they practised equal penance. However, Mahābala deceived his friends and did not break his fasts as they did giving various excuses for the same. He thus managed to perform 'superior penance'. But because his 'penance was mixed with deceit', he acquired a karma that made him a woman in future life (clearly implying a kind of punishment) and also made him a Tīrthaṅkara.

When Mahābala and his six noble friends were 84 lakh pūrvas old,[1] and had observed their vows for 84,000 years, they took a vow to fast-unto-death (*sallekhanā*), and died in due course. As a reward for their pious lives and austere asceticism they were reborn as gods in Vaijayanta heaven.

At that time in Jambūdvīpa, in the southern half of Bharatavarsha (i.e. India), the city called Mithilā was ruled by king Kumbha of the Ikshvāku dynasty. It was into the womb of his chief queen Prabhāvatī that Mahābala's Jīva (soul), its life completed in heaven, descended. The splendour of the Arhat, i.e. the Jina was indicated by the fourteen dreams that Prabhāvatī had seen at the time of conception. Subsequently, she bore a daughter who was later given the name of Mallī and who became the nineteenth Tīrthaṅkara. It was because of the *karma* produced by deceit in the former birth, that the nineteenth Tīrthaṅkara was born as a female marked with a water-jar (*kumbha*). However she was born with all the favourable marks (of a Jina). The Dikkumārīs (the maiden guardians of the four directions) performed her birth rites, the Indras conducted her to the top of Mt. Meru and bathed her in turn, god Śakra anointed and worshipped her in the proper manner, and took her back to Mithilā. In

1. A *pūrva* is equal to 8,400,000 years.

the meantime, her six former companions were also born as princes in the neighbouring kingdoms of Sāketa, Champā, Śrāvastī, Vārāṇasī, Hastināpura, and Kāmpilya. After they grew to manhood, they developed a great desire to marry the Mithilā princess Mallī who knowing the thoughts of the six kings by means of her clairvoyance had a life-like golden statue of herself prepared and installed in the palace grove. In to the palate of the statue she threw a ball of food daily. When the envoys of the six kings arrived before the king of Mithilā simultaneously, king Kumbha took offense at their audacity and ordered them to leave his city at once. Thus humiliated, the six royal suitors laid a joint siege of Mithilā. Thereupon, Mallī asked each suitor to come one by one in the room where the golden statue was placed and removed the cover of palate in the presence of each of them. Immediately there arose the unbearable odour of rotten food. Mallī then reminded them of their former lives together. This enlightened them and they accepted her as their guru.

When she was "one hundred years old, and twenty-five bows tall," Mallī renounced the world and became a religious mendicant. She also acquired a direct awareness of other's thoughts (*manaḥ-paryāya*) as well as Jinahood. Her six former suitors also became mendicants and her father became a Jaina lay-devotee alongwith many others. Thereafter, Jina Mallī wandered through villages, towns, and cities to enlighten people capable of emancipation. Her saṅgha was composed of 40,000 noble ascetics (*sādhus*), 55,000 nuns (*sādhvīs*), 183,000 laymen (*śrāvakas*), and 370,000 laywomen (*śrāvikās*). She wandered over the earth for 55,000 years. Ultimately she went to Mt. Sammeta and undertook a fast with 500 nuns and 500 monks. At the end of a month of fasting, she became emancipated i.e. became a *kevalin*, i.e. attained "isolated perfection". Her emancipation is said to have taken place one thousand million years after the emancipation of Aranātha (the eighteenth Jina).

According to the Jaina faith, the *Jinasattvas* or the Jinas-in-the-making, i.e. the future or potential Jinas, were born endowed with three kinds of knowledge: sense-knowledge (*mati-jñāna*), study-knowledge (*śruta-jñāna*), and clairvoyant-knowledge (*avadhi-jñāna*). They also possessed certain other superior qualities. Yet they still had some 'pleasure-karmas' left from which they needed freedom. They could exhaust them or burn them out only by indulging in sensual pleasures such as marriage, begetting children and enjoying kingship. It was through the enjoyment of these pleasures that they could become pure and fit to control their feelings and conquer their

passions (i.e., become Jinaś) and to attain ultimate liberation (*Kaivalyam*) in this, their last life on earth. But these pleasures, of love marriage, children and kingship were denied to Jina Mallī for her deceptive behaviour in her Jinasattva days as Mahābala.[1]

However, the Digambaras never accepted that Mallī, a woman could ever become a Jina and attain liberation. That status was meant for men exclusively. Even the Śvetāmbaras, who maintained throughout their history that Mallī was a female Jina who attained liberation, insisted upon her chastity and never believed that she lived the normal married life usual for other Jinas.

Pārśvanātha : The Twenty-third Tīrthaṅkara

According to the Jaina tradition, the twentieth Jaina Tīrthaṅkara was Munisuvrata who was followed by Naminātha. At the time of the Mahābhārata War, the Order was led by Neminātha, the twenty-second Tīrthaṅkara who is said to have belonged to the same Yādava family to which Kṛshṇa belonged. If the Mahābhārata War was fought in the 9th century B.C., a theory to which we are inclined to subscribe,[2] Neminātha may also be assigned to that period. It imparts some strength to his historicity[3] because Pārśvanātha, the 23rd Tīrthaṅkara is usually placed in the eighth century B.C.

Jainism gathered strength about the eighth century B.C. under Pārśvanātha.[4] He is said to have been the son of Vāmā, wife of Aśvasena, king of Banaras. He was the people's favourite or 'beloved of men' (*Purisādāniya*). He lived for 30 years as a householder. Then, "after fasting for three and a half days without drinking water, he put on a divine robe and together with 300 men... entered the state of houselessness." On the 8th day of his deep meditation he obtained *Kevala jñāna*. Subsequently, he had "an excellent community of 16,000 śramaṇas with Āryadatta at their head", numerous others with separate heads and 2,000 female disciples. Pārśva died at the age of 100 'on the summit of Mount Sammeta' (Parasnath or Pareśanātha hill near Gomoh railway station) about 250 years before Mahāvīra's death. This gap between him and Mahāvīra, usually

1. Sharma, *op.cit.*, p. 442.

2. Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'Mahābhārata aur Dāśarājña Yuddhoṅ kī Tithiyāṅ', *Purākalpa*, No. 1, Varanasi, 1974, pp. 5-18.

3. It, however, does not mean that the details of his life as given in the Jaina texts are necessarily correct.

4. See, Muni, Devendra, *Bhagavāna Pārśva : Eka Samīkshātmaka Adhyayana*, Poona, 1969; cf. also Shastri, Parmanand Jain, 'Bhagavān Pārśvanātha', *Anekānta*, XVIII, No. 6, pp. 269-74.

regarded as true, places him in the 8th century B.C.

The religion of Pārśva was called '*chāujjāma dhamma*' (*châturyāma dharma*) enjoining four vows of abstinence from violence (*paṇaivāya* or *hiṁsā*), untruth (*mushāvāya* or *asteya*), stealing (*adinnādāna* or *steya*) and possession (*bahiddhādāna* or *parigraha*). According to Jaina scholars, though the vow of chastity (*maithuna-viramaṇa* or *brahmacharya*) is not explicitly stated, yet it is implied in the 4th vow of *aparigraha*. These four vows show that Pārśva based his order of monks on moral principles and his first vow of non-violence suggests that he raised his voice of protest against animal sacrifices of the Vedic Brāhmaṇas. According to the *Āchārāṅga* Mahāvīra's parents, who were worshippers of Pārśva, 'repented, confessed and did penance according to their sins, and on a bed of Kuśa grass rejected all food their bodies drying, up by the last mortification of the flesh which ends in death.' This shows Pārśva's leanings towards repentance and self-mortification. He apparently taught that self-control (*saṁyama*) results in the cessation of karman and penance leads to its annihilation.

From the *Kalpasūtras* we learn that Pārśva had organised his *saṁgha* by bringing all his disciples under four classes (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen) each headed by a Gaṇadhara. Pushpachūlā was the chief controller (*gaṇinī*) of the nunnery. The mention of nuns and laywomen suggests that he did not neglect women.

The belief in the historicity of Pārśva is confirmed by the Jaina canon which not only gives us some idea of his doctrines but also preserves anecdotes about his followers. The account of Keśī, one of his disciples, in the canonical books, is quite realistic. He is said to have converted King Paësi to the faith of Pārśva. He also held a disputation with Goyama (Gautama Indrabhūti), the chief disciple of Mahāvīra. Several other disciples of Pārśva[1] are said to have expressed a desire to exchange the religion of the four vows of Pārśva for the one with five vows of Mahāvīra. As noted above, even the parents of Mahāvīra are said of have belonged to the lay-following of Pārśvà. Moreover, Jacobi has conclusively shown that a Buddhist Sūtra (*Sāmaññaphalasutta*) mistakenly attributes to Mahāvīra the religion of the four vows, which really belonged to Pārśva. Such a mistake could only have occurred if the religion of Pārśva actually had some following at that time. The conversation between Keśī and

1. According to *Vyākhyāprajñapti* 9.32 Gāṅgeya, a follower of Pārśva, accepted the *pañchamahāvratas* of Mahāvīra. Among such other followers of Pārśva were included Ārya Kālāsavesiyaputta, Peḍhalaputta, etc.

Goyama (Gautama) in the *Uttarādhayana* testifies to the friendly relations between the followers of Pārśva and Mahāvīra and suggests that, in spite of some minor differences, the two were essentially the same. By the very nature of the case, tradition has preserved only those points of Pārśva's teachings which differed from the religion of Mahāvīra, while all the common points are ignored.[1] The main outward difference between the two sects was that Pārśva allowed the use of a white garment by the monks, while Mahāvīra forbade even this. Hence, the two Jaina sects are entitled Śvetāmbara (white-clad) and Digambara (sky-clad or naked). But such differences that are few in number make Mahāvīra definitely a reformer of an existing faith, and the addition of a vow, the emphasis on nudity and a more systematic arrangement of its philosophical tenets may be credited to his reforming zeal.[2] This fact is also brought out by the traditional life of Mahāvīra. We are told that unlike the Buddha, who at the begining of his spiritual career lived with some teachers with whose teachings he became dissatisfied and finally found out the truth for himself, Mahāvīra followed a well-established creed, obviously that of Pārśva. Equally significant is the absence in Jainism of anything equal to Buddha's insistence that his followers should remember well his first sermon, suggestive of its novelty. Above all, the early Buddhist literature makes it quite clear that it regarded Mahāvīra not as a founder of a new sect, but merely as a leader of an already existing religious community.[3]

As the nature of pre-Mahāvīra Jaina doctrines is not fully known, some speculative thinking by modern scholars on this subject has been natural.[4] According to R. Williams, some aspects of later Jainism may be regarded as ascribable to a pre-Mahāvīra and indeed a pre-Pārśva period. Among these he includes *sallekhanā* (when the body is cast aside like leaves shed by a tree); the pursuit of an ascetic way of life characterised by nudity and possessionlessness but not by brahmacharya; the use of some forms of worship including the ritual

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1. Cf. Ghatage, A.M., in *AIU*, p. 412.

2. *Ibid.* According to Dharmananda Kosambi (*Pārśvanātha kā Chāturyāma Dharma*, pp. 24-26), before becoming enlightened the Buddha had lived in the Pārśva Order for some time.

3. Ghatage, *op. cit.*

4. Cf. Jacobi, SBE, 45, Intro.; 'Mahāvīra and his Predecessors', *IA*, IX; Jain, Bhagchandra, 'Antiquity of the Śramaṇa Cult', *World Buddhism*, XV, No. 1, 1960, pp. 3-6; Phaltane, L.A., 'An Ancient Form of Jainism', *Jain Antiquary*, XXII, No. 2, pp. 17-20.

posture of devotion called *kāyotsarga* and the observance of *ahiṁsā* devolving from the postulations of forms of life such as *pṛthvī-kāyas*, *vāyu-kāyas*, *tejaḥ-kāyas* and *vanaspati kāyaṣ*. These last elements, usually termed animistic, are the proof and measure of the antiquity of Jainism. Williams also believes that the ideals from which they evolved were particularly popular in Gujarat and were associated with a system of number magic in which the figure of four was of paramount importance and the cult of sacred mountains, one of which, namely Girnar, was closely linked with Neminātha.[1]

1. Williams, R., 'Before Mahāvīra', *JRAS*, Pts. 1-2, 1966, pp. 2-6.

Chapter 7

Śramaṇa Mahāvīra

Life of Mahāvīra

Mahāvīra was born in a suburb of Vaiśālī called Kuṇḍagrāma, now known as Basukuṇḍa. His original name was Vardhamāna. The more popular name Mahāvīra is said to have been bestowed on him by the gods. He has also been given a number of epithets like *Nāyaputta* 'a scion of the Nāya clan', *Kāsava* on account of his gotra, *Vesāliya* after his place of birth, and *Vedehadinna* after his native country. The Nāya clan to which he belonged in known as Nāta (or Ñāta) in Pali and Jñātṛ in Sanskrit. His parents were Siddhārtha, a wealthy nobleman, and Triśalā (also called Priyakāriṇī and Videhadattā), a sister of Cheṭaka, the Lichchhavi chief. According to the Śvetāmbara tradition, his embryo was transferred from the womb of the Brāhmaṇa lady Devānandā,[1] wife of Ṛshabha, to that of Kshattriyāṇī Triśalā since a Brāhmaṇī or a woman of any other low family was not worthy to give birth to a Tīrthaṅkara. As the *Kalpasūtra* states the king of gods on learning of the descent of Mahāvīra into the womb of Devānandā reflected, "It never has happened, nor does it happen, nor will it happen that Arhats, Chakravartins, Baladevas or Vāsudevas, in the past, present or future should be born in low families, poor families, indigent families, beggars' families or Brāhmaṇical families."[2] In the Canon Mahāvīra himself speaks of Devānandā as his mother and of the role of Hariṇegamesi in the transference of the embryo. A sculpture from Mathurā also depicts this scene.[3]

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1. For an interpretation of the dream of Devānandā see Gupta, S. K., 'Devānandā's Dream : An Interpretation of Its Symbolism', *Jijñāsā*, Jaipur, 1, Nos. 3-4, pp. 128-47.

2. Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, Vol. I, Oxford, 1892, p. 225.

3. According to the Śvetāmbaras, the birth-place of Mahāvīra was Lachhuar or Lachhwad in the southern part of Monghyr Distt. The Digambaras, however, give this honour to Kuṇḍalapura near Nālandā.

At the normal age Mahāvīra was married to Yaśodā (daughter of King Samaravīra of Vasantapura or of King Jitaśatru of Kaliṅga) who gave birth to a daughter called Aṇojjā or Priyadarśanā. She was married to his sister's son Jamāli, whose name is not found in older sources. It may have been due to the ignominious role he played in the first schism of the Jaina Church.

As he did not wish to grieve his parents, Mahāvīra renounced the world only after their death and that too after taking the permission of his elder brother Nandivardhana. He was at that time 30 years old. After entering the life of houselessness he wore clothes for a year and a month and then walked about naked. For more than 12 years he neglected his body and practised extreme self-mortification. The *Āchārāṅga* gives us a beautiful picture of the way in which he performed his meditation and spent his days in austerities, and also of the treatment he received from the unfriendly people of the neighbouring countries. He was born with three types of knowledge. During the 13th year, outside the town Jṛmbhikāgrāma on the bank of the river Ṛjupālikā, not far from an old temple, in the field of the householder Sāmāga, under a śāla tree he obtained the fourth type of knowledge or Omniscience (*Kevala jñāna*).

An important event of Mahāvīra's life was his meeting with Gosāla Maṅkhaliputta, the head of the Ājīvika sect. According to the one-sided account of the *Bhagavatīsūtra*, Gosāla became a pupil of Mahāvīra in the second year of his monkhood and remained with him for six years. Then came a breach between the two on the question of rejuvenation (*supra*, Ch.5) and may be also on other points. Gosāla proclaimed himself a Jina and lived in Śrāvastī. The two met again sixteen years later and again quarrelled. Gosāla died soon after, some 16 years before Mahāvīra.[1]

Whether Mahāvīra had been a pupil of Gosāla or *vice versa* is a debatable question, but it is true that there are similarities between the Ājīvika and the Jaina doctrines. According to Jacobi, it is quite probable that some rigid Jaina rules for monks came from the code of the Ājīvikas.[2] Some significance may also be attached to the coincidence of Mahāvīra giving up his garment in the year of his meeting with Gosāla. It would explain to some extent as to why does the Jaina Canon make frequent attempts at refuting the Ājīvika doctrines in strong language while it takes hardly any note of the Buddhist religion. On the other hand, the Pali canon quite often refutes

1. *AIU*, p. 414.
2. SBE, XLV, p. xxxii.

the teachings of Mahāvīra along with those of Gosāla and other teachers (*Titthiyas*).

With the acquisition of omniscience, Mahāvīra entered on his career as a religious teacher. The last 30 years of his life were spent in teaching his religion and organising the Jaina saṅgha. He used to wander for eight months of the year and spend the four months of the rainy season in some famous town. The Jaina tradition gives the names of the places where he spent one or more rainy seasons.

He stayed for the first rainy season in Astikāgrāma, three rainy seasons in Champā and Pṛshṭichampā, twelve in Vaiśālī and Vaniya-grāma, fourteen in Rājagaha and the suburb of Nālandā, six in Mithilā, two in Bhadrikā, one in Albhika, one in Pālitabhūmi, one in Śrāvastī, and one in the town of Pāvā. This record shows how did Mahāvīra wander over wide areas for preaching Jainism. It also gives us a fair idea of the country over which he wandered propagating his faith, though we must remember that this list is neither exhaustive and nor systematic.

Mahāvīra underwent many sufferings during his spiritual career, specially in the pathless country of the Lāḍhas, in the Vajjabhūmi and Subbabhūmi, where 'the dogs hit him, ran at him' and the people used abusive language and asked him to go away. However, he enjoyed extensive royal patronage also. Śreṇika Bimbisāra, the king of Magadha, was devoted to Mahāvīra and was related with him on Mahāvīra's mother's side. The Jaina attempt to explain away the parricidal act of Bimbisāra's son Kuṇika Ajātaśatru suggests that Ajātaśatru was more inclined towards Jainism than to any other religion. Later Jaina tradition brings nearly all the kings of north India of those days in relation to Mahāvīra by describing their queens as daughters of Cheṭaka, the maternal uncle of Mahāvīra.

At first Mahāvīra wandered single, but gradually he became surrounded with monks and nuns. He organised them into a saṅgha into which the *saṁgha* of Pārśva was, after some time, obviously merged. He had an excellent community of 14,000 Śramaṇas with Indrabhūti at their head, several thousand nuns with Chandanā as their leader and innumerable lay-votaries and hundreds of sages to preach his tenets. The *Kalpasūtra* states that he had nine Gaṇas and eleven Gaṇadharas. His eleven Gaṇadharas[1] were Indrabhūti, Agnibhūti, Vāyubhūti, Āryavyakta, Sudharman,Mandikaputra,

1. Chakraborty, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, p. 344. Incidentally, here a reference to 'Mauryaputra' is historically significant, for it proves the existence of Maurya family or tribe even in the age of Mahāvīra, long before it was raised to imperial dignity by Chandragupta Maurya.

Mauryaputra, Akampita, Achalabhrāṭr, Metārya and Prabhāsa, each of whom had a large body of Śramaṇas whom they had taught. All these eleven Gaṇadharas are said to have died at Rājagṛha after 'fasting for a month without drinking water'. The *Kalpasūtra* mentions 14 other disciples and numerous sthaviras who had preached Jainism in different channels (*śākhās*). Sudharman, the fifth of the eleven Gaṇadharas, became the head of the Jaina church after Mahāvīra and was in turn succeeded by his chief disciple, Jambu.[1]

The *Uvāsagadasāo* tells us of ten chief lay-devotees of Mahāvīra : (1) Ānanda and his wife, (2) Kāmadeva, (3) Chulaṇipiya, (4) Suradeva, (5) Chullasayaga, (6) Kundakoliya (who met Gosāla but remained unshaken in his faith in Mahāvīra), (7) Saddālaputta, (8) Mahāsayaga, (9) Nandiṇīpāyā, and (10) Sālihipiya.[2]

At the age of 72 Mahāvīra died at a place called Majjhimā Pāvā in the house of a ruler of the name of Hastipāla (Hatthivāla) (which may suggest that, contrary to his usual practice, he resided inside the town on account of his illness). This place is said to be modern Pāvāpurī (Patna District). We are told that on the night of his death the kings of the two clans, the Mallas and the Lichchhavis, celebrated the lamp festival in his honour.[3]

The date of Mahāvīra, like that of the Buddha, occupies a very important place in ancient Indian chronology. Generally speaking, two dates of Mahāvīra's death hold the field. They are (1) 527 B.C. (supported by Hoernle, Guerinot, etc.) and (2) 467 B.C. (accepted by Jacobi, Charpentier, etc.). The former is based on the tradition recorded by Merutuṅga, the famous Jaina author, who flourished in the fourteenth century. According to him, Mahāvīra entered Nirvāṇa 470 years before the commencement of the Vikrama era (that is in 57+470=527 B.C.).[4] The second date, i.e. 467 B.C., is based on a tradition recorded by Hemachandra (1088-1172 A.D.), who says that 155 yars after the liberation of Mahāvīra Chandragupta Maurya became king (*Sthavirāvalicharita, Pariśishṭaparvan*, VIII. 339). However, elsewhere[5] we have given reasons to believe that Mahāvīra

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 345.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Ghatage, in *AIU*, p. 415.
4. Cf. Muni Shri Nagrajji, *The Contemporaneity and Chronology of Mahāvīra and Buddha*, Calcutta, 1964.
5. Cf. our Chapter on the chronology of the early Magadhan empire and the dates of Buddha and Mahāvīra in the *Māgadha Sāmrājya kā Udaya*, ed. by Goyal, S.R. and Gupta, S. K., New Delhi, 1981, pp. 148-49.

died three years earlier than Buddha's nirvāṇa in 483 B.C. His death therefore took place in 486 B.C. and birth in 558 B.C.

Jaina Tenets : Jīva and Ajīva Tattvas

From a study of the evolution of the Jaina Canon it is obvious that not many of the discourses of Mahāvīra have survived in their original form. But the remarkable conservatism of Jainism makes it possible that the fundamentals of the creed, as are found in the present Canon, 'are very old indeed and essentially those of Mahāvīra'.[1] Like Buddhism, original Jainism believed in *dukkhavāda*, theory of *karman* and *saṁsāra* (transmigration). Further, like Buddhism it rejected the authority of the Vedas and attached no importance to the cult of sacrifices. But here the similarities between the two end (*infra*), for the detailed teachings of Mahāvīra follow the course of pluralistic realism. His religion was primarily a teaching of severe discipline, founded on the philosophical basis of the primordial duality and opposition of *jīva* (spirit) and *ajīva* (matter). His philosophy might be summed up in one sentence : The living and the non-living by coming into contact with each other, forge certain energies which bring about birth, death and various experiences of life; this process could and must be stopped, and the energies already forged destroyed by a course of discipline leading to salvation.[2] This statement involves seven propositions : firstly, there is something called the living (*jīva*); secondly, there is something called the non-living (*ajīva*); thirdly, the two come into contact with each other (*āsrava*); fourthly, the contact leads to the production of some energies (*bandha*); fifthly, the process of contact could be stopped (*saṁvara*); sixthly, the existing energies could also be exhausted (*nirjarā*); and lastly, salvation (*moksha* or *mukti*) could by achieved. These seven propositions are called the seven *tattvas* or realities by the Jainas.[3]

The first two of these seven propositions—that there is jīva or soul (in infinite number) and that there is ajīva or non-soul—exhaust between them all that exists in the universe. The soul or jīva by itself, is imperceptible, but its presence may be known by the presence of its guṇas (qualities) in a material body. Its essential characteristic is consciousness, which is accompanied by sense activity, respiration, and a certain period of existence in a particular body. There is an infinite number of such souls in the universe both of immobile

1. Cf. Jaini, J. L., *Outlines of Jainism*, Cambridge, 1916.
2. Jain, H.L., in *CHI*, I, p. 403.
3. *Ibid.*

(*sthavara*) and mobile (*trasa*) kinds. They retain their individuality throughout and acquire the shape of the body in which they reside.

Consciousness being the characteristic of a soul, knowledge is inherent in every living being,[1] but its stage of development differs. It may be knowledge derived through senses (*mati jñāna*) or through scriptures (*śruta jñāna*), or of objects remote from one in time and space (*avadhi jñāna*), or of others' mind (*manaḥ paryāya jñāna*) or supreme knowledge (*kevala jñāna*).

Jīvas are by nature perfect, possessed of the qualities of infinite perception, infinite knowledge,[2] infinite power and infinite bliss. There is no God or Supreme soul over and above them. But with the exception of only a few of them they have fallen into the grip of matter and are being forced by it through a round of existence as *saṁsārī* or living beings.[3] The soul's subjection to *pudgala* or matter is the result of its own activities. Affected by affection, aversion or infatuation the soul generates a sort of magnetic energy and attracts to itself the infra-atomic particles of matter called *karman*. *Karman*, the immaterial principle of other Indian religions, is thus conceived of as a matter in Jainism. However, the Jainas, hold that even in the state of bondage soul's power of action is not wholly lost, though its exercise in the absence of true knowledge only leads it to greater bondage. It was a cardinal principle with the Jainas that though man's own actions are responsible for his troubles yet he is capable of working out his own salvation. This is what is meant by their calling themselves Karmavādins and Kriyāvādins.[4]

The second reality or *tattva* is *ajīva*, the lifeless substance, whose chief characteristic is that it lacks consciousness. It is of five kinds : *pudgala*, *dharma*, *adharma*, *ākāśa* and *kāla*. Together with *jīva*, these five categories of *ajīva* constitute the six real subtances (*dravyas*) that exist in the universe.

Pudgala denotes matter or material objects in general. It is the physical basis of the universe just as the jīva tattva is the psychical

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1. Cf. Pande, *Origins*, p. 356.

2. "That in its pure state soul possesses infinite knowledge formed one of the leading dogmas. The 'pure' knowledge (*Kevalajñāna*) of the soul, it was supposed, mirrored the entire universe within itself.... In it all knowable forms belonging to all time become, as it were, revealed in a single flash, which is, however, not to say that it was a mere momentary knowledge." (Pande, *op. cit.*, pp. 356-57).

3. Jain, K.C., 'Soul in Jainism', *Munishrī Mishrīmalji Mahārāja Abhinandana Grantha*, pp. 71-75.

4. Pande, *op. cit.*, pp. 357-58.

basis. The elements of nature—earth, water, fire, and air—are all gross manifestations of matter. It is uncreated, indestructible, and real; so, the material world is not a figment of imagination but is substantially real, real independently of the perceiving mind. The test for assessing the realistic aspect of any philosophical system is the question : 'Does the world exist outside the perceiving mind or not ?' If the answer is that it exists independently of one's own perception, it is symptomatic of the realist position; if not, it indicates an idealist philosophy. The basic definition of *pudgala* which stands for matter in Jainism is that "it can be experienced by the five sense organs." Hence, the Jaina philosophy is a realist philosophy. Each sense organ is capable of giving the perceiver one type of knowledge of the external world; the sum-total of the knowledge thus derived represents the various aspects of the world.

According to Jainas, a second definition of matter is arrived at from the etymology of the word *pudgala*. The term *pud* refers to the process of combination and *gala* stands for dissociation. Therefore, matters is that which undergoes modifications by combinations and dissociations. The exact significane of this definition can be gathered by analysing the Jaina view of the ultimate constituents of matter. When any object is divided, the parts obtained by division can be further divided; but the process of division cannot be indefinitely continued; for sooner or later a position is reached when no further division is possible. This is truly the ultimate constituent of matter, referred to by the term *aṇu* or *paramāṇu* (atom) in Jaina philosophy. The combination of such atoms gives rise to the molecules referred to as *skandhas*. It is the combination of molecules that is responsible for the different types of objects, possessing varying qualities. It is also held that 'out of molecules composed of even a large number of atoms, some are visible and some invisible.' The visibility or general perceivability of the molecules is dependent on the combined process of division and addition.

Molecules or *skandhas* are of six types—(i) *Bhadra-bhadra* : This type of *skandha* (such as solids) when split cannot regain the original, undivided form. (ii) *Bhadra* : When split this type of *skandha* (such as liquids) has the capacity to join together. (iii) *Bhadra-sūkshma* : This type of *skandha* appears gross but is really subtle. It can neither be split nor is capable of being pierced through or taken up in hand. Sun, heat, shadow, light, darkness, etc. are the examples of this type. (iv) *Sūkshma-bhadra* : This type of *skandha* also appears gross but is also subtle. Sensations of touch, smell, colour and sound

are typical examples of this type. (v) and (vi) : Both of these are extremely subtle and beyond sense-perception. The particles of *karman* are cited as their example.

The Jaina view of Reality as Identity and Change is clearly reflected in its atomic theory. The changes we experience in the objects are due to the different modes of combination of atoms, but underlying all the changing modes is the fact that there is the identity of the ultimate constituents, the atoms. The atoms themsleves do not change, only the modes of their combinations undergo that change, producing the various objects.[1]

The second kind of *ajīva* is named *dharma*. It is quite imperceptible, though it fills the entire universe of life and matter (*lokākāśa*). It has none of the characteristic qualities of life or matter, but forms the medium of motion, which is possible only through its existence.[2]

Adharma is the necessary counterpart of *dharma*. It also pervades the whole universe and serves as a medium of rest, 'like the shade of a tree helping the wayfarer to stop for rest.' It will thus be seen that *dharma* and *adharma* are two non-physical, inactive conditions of movement and rest respectively, conceived as real substances. They are different from righteousness and unrighteousness, for which the Jaina use the terms *puṇya* and *pāpa*.

The fourth *ajīva* substance is *ākāśa* (space). Like *dharma* and *adharma* it is non-material. Its nature is to provide space for the existence of all other entities. However, unlike the other substances, it is infinite. Only a part of it, called the *lokākāśa*, is occupied by other substances. The other part, which is void, is called *alokākāśa*. *Dharma*, *adharma* and *ākāśa* are, thus, mediums or conditions of motion, rest and subsistence respectively and all the three are interpenetrating.[3]

The fifth and last *ajīva* substance is *kāla* (time). It also pervades the whole *lokākāśa* in the form of single, independent, minute points that never mix together to form a composite body. It brings about changes or modifications in all the other substances and affords them extension in time, which, by itself, is beginningless and endless.[4] These five varieties of *ajīva*, together with the *jīva*, form the six substances (*dravyas*) that exist in the universe.

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1. Jaini, J. L., *op. cit.*
2. *CHI*, I, p. 405.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*

Other Five Tattvas and the Theory of Moksha

The third *tattva* in the Jaina philosophy is the contact of the soul with matter (*āsrava*). The Jainas, like many other Śramaṇa sects, do not postulate the existence of a God or Supreme being creating, destroying and recreating the world. Jīvas exist in the world from time eternal in association with matter. The jīva is always surrounded by a large volume of fine matter called *karman*. This invades the jīva and settles down on it whenver the jīva is found to be affected by the activities of the body, mind or speech. This contact leads to the formation of what is called the *karmāṇa śarīra* (body of subtle *karman* matter), corresponding to the *liṅga* or *sūkshma śarīra* (subtle body) of the Saṅkhya philosophy which accompanies the soul throughout life as well as in its migrations from one body to another.[1] That the *karmāṇa śarīra* is formed of the actual matter is proved by the fact that it has both weight and matter.

Bandha or bondage is the fourth reality in Jaina religion. The *karmāṇa śarīra* binds the soul in eight different ways. One may, by special efforts, shorten or prolong the effects of karmas. He can also destroy or render ineffectual the existing bondages. This is the subject of the next two realities *saṁvara* and *nirjarā*. *Saṁvara* is the prevention of fresh inflow of the karmas by systematic control of mental and physical activities and *nirjarā* is the destruction of existing karmas by certain austerities. Karmas might exhaust themselves by fructifying and leave the soul free. But this natural process must be hastened by deliberate effort. The best way of annihilating karmas is to practise *tapas*. Mortifying the physical self is an attack on karmas. It expels them from the soul before the time of their natural exhaustion. Jainism thus, like other śramaṇa sects, greatly underlines the value of asceticism and extols the practice of self-torture, fasting and even starving oneself to death.[2] As pointed out by Winternitz, there is a remarkable contradiction between this exaggerated love of death on

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 407; for a detailed study of the Jaina theory of karman cf. Mittal, K. K., 'The Jaina View of Karma', *Bulletin of the Institute of Post-Graduate (Evening) Studies*, Delhi, 1965, pp. 102 ff.; Jain, Bhagchandra, 'The Jaina Theory of *Karma* as Reflected in Pāli Literature', *Nagpur University Journal*, XVI, No. 2, 1966, pp. 168-76.

2. In certain conditions Jainism permits "voluntary religious suicide". "According to Jainism, dying is as much an art as living. A layman is expected not only to live a disciplined life but also to die bravely a detached death. There are elaborate rules about voluntary death (*sallekhanā*), which has been practised not only by the Jaina monks but also by pious laymen; and we have innumerable inscriptions

the part of Jaina saints and their exaggerated fear of killing any living being. Perhaps here one may recognise "a distinctly psychopathological element in much of self-torutre and self-abnegation that goes by the name of asceticism."[1] Yet it must also be admitted that according to the Jaina view what is outwardly death of a saint is really the stage of his attainment of freedom.

When one succeeds in destroying the existing karmas by austerities, the soul realizes its inherent qualities of supreme knowledge and unlimited happiness. It attains salvation (*moksha* or *mukti*), and becomes a perfect being—*siddha. Moksha* is the seventh tattva or reality. Liberated from the bondage of matter, the jīva 'at once rises to the top of the universe, above the highest heaven, where it remains in inactive omniscience and bliss through all eternity.' It recovers its pristine purity and power and exists in the state of *Siddhahood* (perfection) "without caste, unaffected by smell, without the sense of taste, without feeling, without form, without hunger, without old age, without death, without body, without Karma enjoying an endless unbroken calm."[2]

The Ratna Traya

The *quientessence* of the Jaina theory of *moksha* is contained in the *triratna* concept of *Samyak-darśana, Samyak-jñāna* and *Samyak-charitra. Samyak-darśana* is considered to be the prime cause of *moksha* because it paves the way to right knowledge and right conduct. The *Yaśastilaka* tells us that "it is the prime cause of salvation just as the foundation is the mainstay of a palace, good luck that of beauty. life that of bodily enjoyment, royal power that of victory, culture that of nobility and policy that of government." The *Uttarādhyana-sūtra* explains that right knowledge remains unattainable in the absence of right belief and rightness of conduct is out of question without right knowledge. *Samyak-darśana* itself is defined as faith in the seven tattvas viz., *jīva, ajīva, āsrava, bandha, saṁvara, nirjarā* and *moksha.* The Jaina argument is that a person who has faith in the seven *tattvas* (right faith). gains right knowledge (*Samyak-*

commemorating the detached deaths of pious Jainas. This voluntary death is to be distinguished from suicide, which Jainism looks upon as a cowardly sin. When faced by calamity, famine, old age, and disease, against which there is no remedy, a pious Jaina peacefully relinquishes his body, being inspired by a higher religious ideal." (A. N. Upadhye). Instances of such voluntary deaths are common even now.

1. *ERE*, II, p. 63.

2. See Venkatarama Iyer, M. K., '*Jīvanamukti*—The Case For and Against It', *Vedāntakesarī*, LI, No. 1, pp. 153-58.

jñāna)—right in the spiritual sense and not merely in the epistemological sense.

Right knowledge or *Samyak-jñāna* as spiritual knowledge enables the individual to appreciate the nature of the *jīva* in its proper perspective which in turn enables him to adopt the practical steps leading to *moksha*. This is right conduct (*Samyak-charitra*). Thus, the integrated nature of the ethico-spiritual discipline leading to liberation was realized by the Jaina philosophers. This is evident from their belief that none of the three *ratnas* — right faith, right knowledge and right conduct — can be pursued meaningfully and effectively in isolation. Faith, knowledge and ethical living—all three are regarded as important and significant for attaining salvation. The Jainas, however, insist that in the absence of faith the other two do not work. Modern psychology has also proved that 'faith' has in it the key to any cure.

Theories of God and Pañcha Parameshṭhins

As observed earlier the Jaina philosophy is opposed to Sṛshṭivāda. According to the Jainas, there is no creation of the world, nor is there any Creator necessary to explain the nature of the world. Thus, there is no place in Jainism for God as creator and distributor of prize for good conduct and punishment for bad deeds. By gods Jainism understands liberated souls aswell as Tīrthaṅkaras, Omniscient Beings, who provide the highest ideal to which every soul can aspire. In this sense a God in Jainism is basically different from that of Hinduism. But Jainism lacks neither devotional fervour nor ceremonial rituals. The Jainas offer prayers to the liberated souls whom they look upon as Gods, worship them in the concrete form of images and meditate on them.[1] The different types of devotion recognised in Jainism are *stuti*, *vandanā*, *pratimā-pūjana*, *nāma-smaraṇa*, *bhajana-kīrtana*, *vinaya*, *vaiyavṛttya*, etc.[2]

Thus, the Jaina view agrees with that of the Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā in emphasizing the potency of *karman* as the basic principle of *saṁsāra* (relative world) but differs from it in maintaining the doctrine of omniscients (*sarvajñas*). It, however, resembles Vedānta in holding that every individual jīva is potentially a Paramātman. According to the Jaina view, after conquering all the karmas and destroying all the bonds or worldly attachments, the Self exists in its

1. Cf. Upadhye, A. N., *op. cit.*

2. Cf. Sogani, Kamal Chand, 'The Concept of Devotion in Jainism', *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, III, 1965, pp. 80-92.

supreme purity as Siddha-parameshṭhin endowed with the qualities of infinite perception, infinite knowledge, infinite bliss, and infinite power. Such a Parameshṭhin with infinite qualities is the conqueror of *saṁsāra*, a Jina, a God, and serves as the ideal to be aimed at by all persons who desire to escape from the cycle of transmigration.

After the Siddha-parameshṭhins, the Jainas recognize the Arhat-parameshṭhins. They represent a lower stage in liberation than the Siddha-parameshṭhins because they are still attached with a body. Otherwise there is no difference between the two[1] They are important from the human point of view, because they periodically reveal, for the benefit of the world, the path to salvation and the various Āgamas or scriptures embodying the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality. That is why in the Jaina Oṅkāra mantra the Arhats are placed before the Siddhas. The status of the Arhats corresponds to that of the founders of other religions and to the conception of the *avatāras*. After destroying the karmāic bondages through *tapas* a Tīrthaṅkara attains omniscience in this world. He becomes free from wants and desires, remains uncontaminated by the defects of the body which still clings to him, is filled with universal love and mercy for all living beings, and spends his time in propounding the *dharma* for the benefit of the *jīvas* that are still entangled in the bonds of the world. Such Tīrthaṅkaras appear in the world in different cosmic periods, a cosmic period according to the Jaina philosophy consisting of an age of evolution and growth, followed by an age of dissolution and decay. The former is called *utsarpiṇī* and the latter *avasarpiṇī*, the two constituting the complete cosmic cycle of time.[2]

Besides the Siddha- and Tīrthaṅkara-parameshṭhins, Jainism recognizes three other kinds of beings who deserve reverence and worship from the devotees. These are the Āchārya-parameshṭhins, Upādhyāya-parameshṭhins, and Sādhu-parameshṭhins. Though they do not represent the stage of complete liberation, yet they mark important stages towards that goal. The Āchārya-parameshṭhins are free from attachment to external things and are sufficiently advanced in spiritual accomplishment so as to exercise the authority of initiating into the Jina dharma all those who seek to be initiated. The Upādhyāya-parameshṭhins have no authority to initiate people into the Jina-dharma or to organize the Jaina saṅgha. Their function is to popularize the Jina-dharma in order to help the souls entangled in the

1. Sogani, Kamal Chand, 'The Concept of Arhanta (Arhat) in Jainism', *Munishrī Mishrīmaljī Mahārāja Abhinandana Grantha*, pp. 10-14.

2. *CHI*, I, pp. 416-17.

saṁsāra to reach perfection. They only educate and instruct the people. The sādhu-parameshṭhins, the great souls, do not have any definite function, either of authority or of instruction, but still illustrate through their conduct the path of salvation.

Th Jaina Divinities

The Jainas worship the images[1] of their Tīrthaṅkaras, gods and many subsidiary divinities. The Jaina gods and divinities are the various categories of superior beings. The Jaina texts like *Āchāra Dinakara*, *Uttarādhyayanasūtra* and *Abhidhāna Chintāmaṇi* give a classification of gods and goddesses and show that many of them were adaptations from the Brāhmaṇical pantheon. The principal Jaina divinities are the 24 Tīrthaṅkaras or Jinas. Each of them is characterised by his respective cognisance, which is usually carved in the centre of the

S.No.	Name of the Jina	Cognisance	Upāsaka	Śāsanadevatā
1.	Ādinātha	Bull	Gomukha	Chakreśvarī
2.	Ajitanātha	Elephant	Mahāyaksha	Ajitabalā
3.	Sambhavanātha	Horse	Trimukha	Duritāri
4.	Abhinandananātha	Monkey	Yakshanāyaka	Kālikā
5.	Sumatinātha	Krauñcha bird	Tumburu	Mahākālī
6.	Padmaprabha	Lotus	Kusuma	Śyāmā
7.	Supārśvanātha	Svastika	Mātaṅga	Śāntā
8.	Chandraprabha	Moon	Vijaya	Bhṛkuṭi
9.	Suvidhinātha	Makara	Ajita	Sutārakā
10.	Śītalanātha	Śrīvatsa	Brahmā	Aśokā
11.	Śreyāṁśanātha	Rhinoceros	Yakshet	Mānavī
12.	Vāsupūjya	Buffalo	Kumāra	Chaṇḍā
13.	Vimalanātha	Boar	Shaṇmukha	Viditā
14.	Anantanātha	Falcon	Pātāla	Aṅkuśā
15.	Dharmanātha	Thunderbolt	Kinnara	Kandarpā
16.	Śāntinātha	Deer	Garuḍa	Nirvāṇī
17.	Kunthunātha	Goat	Gandharva	Balā
18.	Aranātha	Nandyāvarta	Yakshet	Dhāriṇī
19.	Mallīnātha	Pitcher	Kubera	Dharaṇapriyā
20.	Munisuvrata	Tortoise	Varuṇa	Naradattā
21.	Naminātha	Blue lotus	Bhṛkuṭi	Gāndhārī
22.	Neminātha	Conchshell	Gomedha	Ambikā
23.	Pārśvanātha	Snake	Pārśva	Padmāvatī
24.	Mahāvīra	Lion	Mātaṅga	Siddhāyikā

1. One of the earliest stone images in round found in India, from Lohanipur in Patna belonging to the Maurya-Śuṅga period, is regarded as the image of a Tīrthaṅkara.

pedestal of his image. They also have their individual Upāsakas and Śāsandevatās, who are sometimes described in the texts as the attendant Yakshas and Yakshiṇīs. The main order of the Jaina divine hierarchy is shown in a tabular form on the preceding page.[1]

The table shows that there are some overlappings and repetitions in the nomenclature of the individual Yakshas or Upāsakas (Nos. 7 and 24 and 11 and 18) and in one instance the name of a Śāsanadevī occurs also as that of an Upāsaka (Nos. 8 and 21). There is no doubt that this elaborate grouping was the result of gradual growth and became stereotyped at a later period.

The subsidiary deities of the Jainas have been variously classified. Among them are included Hindu deities such as Śrī-Lakshmī, Gaṇeśa, Kubera, etc. and also the Navagrahas, the Dikpālas, the Vidyādevīs and the Mātṛkās. The Vidyādevīs are sixteen in number. They include Rohiṇī, Prajñapti, Kālī, Mahākālī, Gauri, Mānavī, etc. and are headed by Sarasvatī.

Theory of Knowledge : Saptanaya and Syādvāda

The Jainas admit five kinds of knowledge : *mati* (knowledge by means of senses and mind, including *smṛti* and *tarka*), *śruti* (knowledge by testimony), *avadhi* (knowledge of things even at a distance of time and place, that is, by clairvoyance), *manaḥparyāya* (direct knowledge of the thought of others as in telepathy) and *kevala* (perfect omniscience unlimited by space, time or objects). The first three kinds of knowledge are liable to error, while the last two cannot be wrong. The first two kinds of knowledge are indirect or *paroksha*, the rest are direct or *pratyaksha*. *Chaitanyatā* or consciousness is the essence of jīva and the two manifestations of *chaitanyatā* are perception (*darśana*) and intelligence (*jñāna*). In *darśana*, unlike *jñāna*, details are not perceived. In self-consciousness the subject and object of knowledge and knowledge itself are the different aspects of a single unity. In perfect condition the soul is pure *jñāna* and *darśana*. He is free from doubt, perversity and indefiniteness.[2]

The knowledge is of two forms—*pramāṇa* (knowledge of a thing as it is in itself) and *naya* (knowledge of a thing in its relation). The doctrine of *nayas* or standpoints is a special feature of Jainism. According to one scheme, there are seven *nayas* (*sapta naya*) and all these lead to fallacies (*ābhāsas*) if each of them is taken separately and is treated as absolute.

1. As given in the *AIU*, p. 427.

2. For details see Radhakrişhnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, London, 1923, pp. 294 ff.

When we take a coordinated view of things, we are said to be resorting to *naigama naya*. When we are inclined towards generalization and emphasise common features it is *saṅgraha naya*; and when we are inclined towards particularization, it is *vyavahāra naya*. When a specific point or period of time is of the essence it is *ṛjusūtra naya*. It is, therefore, narrower than *vyavahāra naya*. *Śabda naya* is based on the differentiation made according to the usage of language and grammar. When the derivative significance of words is overlooked and conventional meaning is accepted, it is *samabhirūḍha naya*. And finally, when words are used exactly in their original derivative sense and significance, it is *evambhūta naya*. The first three of these seven *nayas* (*saptanaya*) are grouped under *dravya naya* and the last four under *prayāya naya*.

The Saptanaya theory is based on the fact that all philosophical disputes arise out of a confusion of stand-points. The Jainas illustrate it by the story of the six blind men who each laid hands on a different part of the body of the elephant and tried to describe the whole animal on its basis. Only he who saw the whole could realize that each of them had only a portion of truth. The most important use of these stand-points is of course the *Anekāntavāda* or *Syādvāda*, which means that we cannot affirm or deny anything absolutely about any object. Every preposition is true but only under certain conditions. We may make seven assertions, seemingly contradictory but perfectly true, about a thing : It is (*syād asti*); it is not (*syād nāsti*); it is and is not (*syād asti-nāsti*); it is indescribable (*syād avaktavya*); it is and is indescribable (*syād asti cha avaktavyaṁ cha*); it is not, and is indescribable (*syād nāsti cha avaktavyaṁ cha*); it is, is not, and is indescribable (*syād asti nāsti cha avaktavyaṁ cha*). A man is the father, and is not the father, and is both—these are all perfectly intelligible statements, if one understands the point of view from which they are made. In relation to a particular boy he is the father; in relation to another boy he is not the father; in relation to both the boys taken together he is the father and is not the father. Since both the ideas cannot be conveyed in words at the same time, he may be called indescribable; still he is the father and is indescribable; and so on. Thus, the philosophy of Anekānta is neither self-contradictory nor vague or indefinite; on the contrary it represents a very sensible view of things in a systematized form.[1] This is equivalent to saying that knowledge is only probable.

1. *CHI*, I, p. 406; cf. Amar Chand, 'Jaina Darśana meṅ Saptabhaṅgīvāda', *Anekānta*, XVII, No. 6, 1965, pp. 152-58.

It, however, does not mean that it only implied agnosticism or metaphysical nihilism. The negative result of such a theory of knowledge is apparently agnosticism, but even out of this the Jainas evolved a philosophy.[1]

Whether Syādvāda and Saptanaya dialectics were postulated in the age of Mahāvīra is a debatable question. Jacobi feels that the theory was formulated by Mahāvīra himself but, according to G.C. Pande, as the early texts are silent on the Saptabhaṅgī dialectics it will perhaps be not unreasonable to infer that this remarkably complex and subtle theory was a later development. It is true that the *Bhagavatī* and *Paṇṇavaṇā* refer to the seven-fold Naya, but these texts contain a good deal of later material.[2] In fact, as Jacobi has the pointed out, the Jainas do not associate any doctrinal innovation with Mahāvīra.[3]

Jaina Ethics : Path to Salvation

The mukti-mārga (path to salvation) of Jainism consists of *Samyak-darśana* (right faith), *Samyak-jñāna* (right knowledge), and *Samyak-charitra* (right conduct), known as *triratnas* (the three jewels). These are basically different from the Bhakti-mārga of the Bhāgavatas, Jñāna-mārga of the Vedāntins, and Karma-mārga of the Mīmāṁsakas. Unlike these religious schools, which lay all the emphasis either on *bhakti*, or *jñāna*, or *karman*, as means of salvation, the Jainas believe that all the three must co-exist in a person, if he is to attain salvation. Just as a medicine can cure a malady only when one has faith in its efficacy and knowledge of its use and takes it in fact, the path of *mukti* must consist of all these three elements.[4]

The most important vows of a Jaina are five, namely, he shall not do violence to other living beings (*ahiṁsā*); he shall speak the truth (*satya*); he shall not commit theft (*asteya*); he shall not commit adultery (*brahmacharya*); and he shall set a limit to his greed for worldly possessions (*aparigraha*). Their observance presents many difficulties in the day-to-day life of the householders. For example, as the critics of Jainism have argued, "there are living beings in water and on land and in the sky. When the whole world is teeming with life how will the mendicant be free from violence ?" (*Jale jantuḥ sthale janturākāśe Jantureva cha/Jantumālākule loke kathaṁ bhikshurahiṁsakaḥ*).[5] Hence, for the Jaina householders these *vratas*

1. Ghaṭage, in *AIU*, p. 424.
2. Pande, *Origins*, p. 353.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 354.
4. *CHI*, I, p. 430.
5. Pande, G.C., *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 43; cf. Vyas, Nitin, J., 'The Concept of

have been prescribed in a less rigorous form, and for this reason they are called *aṇuvratas*. In their more rigorous form prescribed for the ascetics they are called the *mahāvratas*. The *aṇuvratas* are minor code of morals and are of limited application while *mahāvratas* are the major code of morals and are applied without limitation. It is not that the partial observance of *ahiṁsā* by a householder will cause no karmāic bondage, but it will be of a minor type, its intensity being proportionate to the intensity of the passion of the man committing it and to the grade of life injured.

Of the five principles *ahiṁsā* or non-violence is considered to be the most important. Actually, the most important characteristic of Jainism is its insistence on the strict observance of the principle of non-violence. The term *ahiṁsā* is sometimes interpreted as strict non-killing and both the terms—non-violence and non-killing—seem to connote a negative teaching without a positive content. But the Jainas look upon *ahiṁsā* as positive doctrine also. They emphasize that any action calculated to inflict injury on a living being is *hiṁsā*. Piercing, binding, overloading, and starving the animals are all forms of *hiṁsā*, and should be avoided. Even thinking ill of others or contemplation of injury is mental violence.

For giving practical guidance in this matter, injury to others has been divided according to the mental attitude of the person into four kinds[1]—accidental (e.g. when injury is inflicted on living beings in cooking, walking, bathing, etc.), occupational (e.g. when a soldier strikes his enemy), protective (e.g when one kills an attacking tiger or a dacoit) and intentional (when one kills simply for the sake of killing, as for meat-eating and rituals). The householder is required to abstain fully from the fourth kind and to the best of his ability from the other three, while an ascetic is expected to abstain from all these types of violence.

The Jainas were extremely critical of the Buddhists who allowed their monks to eat meat if they themselves did not kill the

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Ahiṁsā in Jainism', in *Aruṇa Bhāratī : Professor A.N. Jani Felicitation Volume*, ed. B. Datta, Baroda, 1983, pp. 107-14; Aman, G.L., 'The Jain Conception of Ahiṁsā', *Munishrī Mishrīmalji Mahārāja Abhinandana Grantha*, pp. 24-32; Jindal, K.B., 'Jaina Ethics : Its Ideal and Viewpoint', *ibid.*, pp. 65 ff.; Boolchand, 'Ahiṁsā : The Basic Social Ethics', *Muni Hazarimal Smriti Grantha*, pp. 27ff.; Bhattacharya, H., 'The Vratas Other Than Ahiṁsā', *ibid.*, pp. 88-93; Jindal, K.B., 'The Doctrines of Jainism', *ibid.*, pp. 30-45; Sogani, Kamal Chand, 'The Concepts of Parisaha and Tapa in Jainism', *ibid.*, pp. 45-62.

1. *CHI*, I, pp. 408-09.

animals but got the meat in alms. The Jainas argue that but for the meat-eaters the butchers would not indulge in the act of killing the animals, and, therefore, meat-eaters are responsible (though indirectly) for killing. The Jainas were equally critical of the Vedic practice of sacrificing animals in their rituals which they regarded as violence committed in the name of religion.

The same kind of concession, as is allowed to a householder in the observance of *ahiṁsā*, is given to him in the observance of the other four vows. Satya or truth-speaking is the second vow to be practised by all. It includes abstaining from spreading false ideas, divulging secrets of others, back-biting, forging of documents, breach of trust, etc. In the case of the householder the strict observance of the principle is not insisted. Ahiṁsā being the most important vow to be observed all other vows are to be observed in such a way that the vow of non-violence is not broken. In a situation where truth-speaking may ensue violence or killing, as for example in revealing the place in which a man is hiding (to escape from the robbers who are intent on killing) deliberate uttering of falsehood is considered more ethical.

The vow of *asteya* (non-stealing) signified strict adherence to one's own possessions, not wanting to take hold of the possessions of others. According to the Jaina.morality, it would be a theft if one takes away secretly or by force what does not belong to him, appropriates to himself what somebody else has forgotten or has dropped, accepts what he knows to be stolen property and instructs another person in the methods of stealing.[1] All the evil practices observed in trade and commerce such as adulterating the materials and not giving others their money's worth, not weighing and measuring properly and indulging in black-marketing constitute stealing (*steya*). Therefore, *asteya vrata* consists of avoiding such malpractices.

In the case of the ascetics the vow of *brahmacharya* (celibacy) signifies complete abstention from sex. Even thoughts entertained about sex were considered to be as undersiable and unethical as the sexual act itself. The principle of co-ordination of thought (*mana*), word (*vachana*) and deed (*karman*) is applicable here as well. It is obvious ,however, that in the case of the householder the vow cannot be interpreted in its literal and strict sense. Therefore, observing the vow of *brahmacharya* in the case of the householder signifies only being completely faithul to one's wife (or husband). A householder should look upon all other women as his mothers, sisters or daughters.

1. *CHI*, I, p. 409.

He would be violating the vow of *brahmacharya* even if he talks obscenity.

The meaning of the vow of *aparigraha* (non-possession) is obvious in the case of the ascetic since he has necessarily to renounce all his property and wealth before joining the saṅgha. But the mere physical renunciation is not of much value. Because of their constant association with him, it is very likely that thoughts about his former possessions may still linger on in his mind. The ascetic has to combat the tendency to retrospect about what he no longer 'possesses' by trying not to have even thoughts about the things he has renounced. But in the case of the householder, *aparigraha* only signifies putting a stop to his desires for more than what he needs since a strict adherence to this vow by householders would be detrimental to society. On the other hand, by adopting the right or ethical methods in his profession he will help the society to derive the maximum benefit out of his skill in producing wealth. If a householder ever happens to earn more than that, he must spend it away in charities, the best and recognized forms of which are distribution of medicines and religious books, giving support to teachers, making provision for saving the lives of people in danger, and feeding the hungry and the poor.

The five vows are thus the guide-posts for man who is in search of his own self. The integrated pattern observable in the ethical principles is evident from the fact that all the principles are ultimately to be referred to the vow of *ahiṁsā*. From the householder's point of view, the *aṇuvratas* are meant to give him practice in self-control and renunciation. This purpose becomes more pronounced in the next three vows called *guṇavratas*. They are *digvrata* (not to travel in any direction beyond a certain distance in one's own life time), *deśavrata* (prescribing further limits to movement for a specific period) and *anartha daṇḍavrata* (setting limits on one's own belongings and occupations for a particular period).

The next four vows[1] called *śikshāvratas* take him a step further. The first of these is *sāmāyika* (periodical contemplation and mental renunciation of worldly possessions). Physical discipline is then secured by the next two vows, *poshadhopavāsa* (observing complete fast, reading scriptures and contemplating upon the self) and *bhogopabhogaparimāṇa* (adhering to a programme of food and comforts in a restrictive manner, both as regards quantity and quality). The last of the *śikshāvratas* is *atithi-saṁvibhāga* (feeding out each

1. For details vide *CHI*, I, p. 410.

day of what is cooked for himself, such righteous and holy persons as may turn up at his house at the proper time).

These five *aṇuvratas*, three *guṇavratas*, and four *śikshāvratas*—in all twelve—constitute the chief vows of a householder, and a proper observance of them means right conduct (*Samyak-charitra*).[1] But right conduct has to be preceded by right faith (*Samyak-darśana*) and right knowledge (*Samyak-jñāna*). A deep devotion to those who have attained perfection or are on the way to it aswell as to their teachings, constitutes right faith while right knowledge is the knowledge of the seven *tattvas*. The Jaina householder is expected to get rid of the three types of superstitious ignorance and the eight kinds of arrogance. The three types of superstitious ignorance are the three *mūḍhas —loka-mūḍha*, *deva-mūḍha* and *pāshaṇḍī-mūḍha*.[2] The *loka-mūḍha* refers to the general superstitions among people (e.g. the belief that by bathing in the so-called sacred rivers, or climbing up the hills, or walking through fire one acquires sanctity). The *deva-mūḍha* refers to the belief of the people in the powers of gods and goddesses who are supposedly endowed with human qualities and human emotions, and to the propitiation of such gods and goddesses with the object of securing certain selfish ends. The third, the *pāshaṇḍī-mūḍha*, refers to devotion to certain false ascetics and acceptance of their teaching as gospel truth. Freedom from these three types of superstition is the primary condition of right faith.

As it is mainly due to the passions that the soul becomes bound by the karmas, so anger, pride, deception, greed, etc. must be counteracted by the ten best virtues (*daśa dharmas*)—forgiveness, humility, straightforwardness, contentment, truthfulness, restraint, austerity, purity, chastity, and renunciation. To cultivate necessary religious attitude one should constantly reflect on twelve religious topics (*anupreksha*)—(i) everything is transitory; (ii) men are helpless against death; (iii) the cycle of existence is full of misery; (iv) the soul has to struggle all alone; (v) relatives and others are quite separate from oneself; (vi) the body is impure; (vii) *karman* is constantly inflowing; (viii) *karman* should be stopped by the cultivation of virtues; (ix) *karman* should be destroyed by penances; (x) the nature of universe; (xi) rarity of religious knowledge; and (xii) the true nature of religion.

One who has right faith should also be free from the eight

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 409-10.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 431.

types of arrogance. These are : arrogance of (1) possession of intelligence; (2) ability to conduct a grand type of temple worship; (3) being born in a noble family; (4) belonging to a high caste; (5) possessing physical or mental strength; (6) having magical powers; (7) possessing the powers of *tapas* or *yoga*; and (8) having a beautiful personality.[1]

The Jaina Monasticism

All persons, irrespective of sex, caste or status, were allowed to enter the Jaina saṅgha if they were considered ethically fit. People renounced the world because of several reasons, specially when they became tired or afarid of the worldly life (*saṁsāra bhayodvignā*). The *Thāṇā. Sut.* gives us examples of people becoming monk to avoid troubles, mentions a pair of friends renouncing the world by mutual agreement (*saṅgārapavajjā*) and describes those who were induced by instruction (*akkhātapavajjā*). Some became monks to maintain themselves (*ihaloga*), or to get good food, or to get rid of debts (*moyā-vaitta*), etc.

Recognition of the equality of all living beings is the chief feature of Jaina asceticism. The greatest temptation in this world are women; and so the monks are advised to avoid women and withdraw their mind from them. The true road to deliverance lies in right knowledge, right faith and right conduct (*ratna traya*) and austerities. He who sincerely performs all his duties by these methods, attains purity and gets rid of all miseries. The *karmas* must be annihilated by austerities, both external and internal. On the Jaina monks engaged in austerities were imposed severe restrictions of food, drink, clothes, sleep, etc. Mahāvīra himself renounced bathing, cleaning the teeth, etc. and took on special penances.[2] External austerity is of six kinds:[3] (i) *Anaśana* (fasting), (ii) *Avamodarikā* (abstinence), (iii) *Bhikshācharyā* (collecting alms), (iv) *Rasa-tyāga* (abstention from dainty food), (v) *Kāyakleśa* (mortification of the body), and (vi) *Pratisaṁlīnata* (restraint on passions). Internal austerity are also of six kinds: (1) *Prāyaśchitta* (expiation of sins); (2) *Vinaya* (politeness); (3) *Vaiyāvṛtya* (serving the guru); (4) *Svādhyāya* (study); (5) *Dhyāna* (meditation); and (6) *Vyutsarga* (abandoning of the body).

The essential duties of a monk are six-fold. They are mentioned in the *Uttarā. Sūt.* thus : (1) *Sāmyāyika* (moral and

1. *Ibid.*
2. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 366.
3. For details see Chakraborty, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, pp. 367 ff.

intellectual purity of the soul); (2) *Chaturviṁśatistava* (adoration of 24 Jinas); (3) *Vandanā* (paying reverence to the *guru*); (4) *Pratikramaṇa* (expiation of sins); (5) *Kāyotsarga* (a particular position of the body); and (6) *Pratyākhyāna* (self-denial).[1]

The standard of moral discipline and self-control was set by Mahāvīra who preached five great vows to regulate the lives of monks and nuns. The first great vow of a monk is *ahiṁsā*. He must renounce the killing of all living creatures, whether subtle or gross, whether movable or immovable.

The second great vow is that the monk must 'renounce all vices of lying speech' (*Savvāo mushāvāyāo viramaṇam*) and so he should speak after deliberation and should renounce anger, greed, fear and mirth.

The third great vow is that the monk must 'renounce all taking of anything not given' (*Savvāo adinnadānāo viramaṇam*). He should beg after deliberation for a limited ground, consume his food and drink with the permission of his superior, take possession of a limited part of a ground for a fixed time, renew the grant of a portion of some ground and beg for a limited ground for his co-religionists after deliberation.[2]

The fourth great vow is abstaining from sexual intercourse with gods or men or animals (*Savvāo mehumāo viramaṇam*).

The fifth great vow is the renunciation of 'all attachments, whether small or great' (*Savvāo pariggahāo viramaṇam*). Attachment means 'pleasure in external object', that is, pleasure of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and feeling.

The *Uttarā. Sūt.* and *Daśavaikālika* mention a sixth vow also, that is abtsention from eating at night (*Savvāo raibhoyanāo viramaṇam*).

The Jaina monks had to wander from place to place. However during their journey they could stay in lonely places fit for study. Later on to provide monks with houses some householders built special buildings. Rain-retreat (*varshāvāsa*) was regarded as compulsory for monks, for it helped them to abstain from injury to living beings. They were, however, allowed to tour in the rainy season in special circumstances.

The asceticism practised by the Digambara school is reflected mainly in its two texts, the *Pravachanasāra* and the *Mūlāchāra*, which are generally attributed to Kundakunda and Vaṭṭakera respectively.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 372.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 375.

Kundakunda is looked upon as a prominent leader of the Mūlasaṅgha. According to A.N. Upadhye, he flourished at the beginning of the Christian era.

The Digambaras had denounced the Jaina canon of the Śvetāmbaras compiled at Pāṭaliputra after the famine, and so Kundakunda composed 84 small treatises in Prakrit based upon whatever traditional texts he had inherited from the early teachers. A comparative study of the monastic rules of both the schools shows that the points of similarity between them are far larger than those of differences. The life of Digambara monks was, however, severer for they practised nudity and the principle of non-possession rigorously. Their requisites were very insignificant. They slept on bare ground instead of a plank. They were more careful to avoid injury to living beings, though both the schools based their moral discipline on *ahiṁsā*. According to the Digambaras, it is the mental condition, rather than the visible act, that is of importance. *Parigraha* also does not so much consist in having physical possession of the external objects as in being infatuated with them.

Interestingly, nudity was discouraged for nuns by both the schools.[1] According to the Śvetāmbaras, Śivabhūti founded a sect called Bodiya at Rathavīrapura, about 699 years after the demise of Mahāvīra. We know how he started nudity among men but he did not allow his sister Ụttarā to observe it. Kundakunda presents the Digambara view on this matter thus: "Women are forbidden from accepting severe type of asceticism, such as nakedness, because they are constitutionally unfit : there is a growth of subtle living beings in their organ of generation, between their breasts, in their navel and armpits; their mind is fickle and devoid of purity; they have monthly courses and they cannot concentrate undisturbed." So, he prescribed that nuns should take meals once and have a garment which they may retain even when they take meals. Thus, Kundakunda does not exclude women from entering the Order but he prescribes moderate and less rigorous rules for them than were prescribed for monks. The Śvetāmbaras were even more liberal to women than the Digambaras because they thought that women could get liberation in this very birth while the Digambaras believed that women cannot get liberation without taking birth as men.

But in spite of these differences the texts of both the schools present almost the same monastic atmosphere. Even nudity is prescribed not only in the Diagambara texts but also in those of the

1. *Ibid.*, p. 440.

Śvetāmbara, though their commentators declare that it was meant for the Jinakappi monks alone.[1]

Relation of Jaina and Buddhist Śramaṇism with Each Other

Being the products of the same śramaṇic intellectual atmosphere the teachings of the Buddha and Mahāvīra naturally use similar expressions and display some common features.[2] The belief in the past and future Enlightened Ones, idea of the impermanence of the worldly pleasures, rejection of the authority of the Vedas and of the efficacy of the Brāhmaṇical rituals were common grounds between them. A pessimistic attitude towards life and world was shared by both. Both of them also subscribed to the doctrines of Saṁsāravāda and Kriyāvada. Further, both emphasized the superiority of the ascetic over the householder, but attached 'due importance to moral and disciplined lay life as a preparatory or initial stage for liberation'. Jainism is a frankly atheistic creed recognising no Supreme or Universal Soul over and above the individual jīvas and an atheistic strain is implicit in the Buddhist practical morality also. At least both of them deny the existence of an intelligent first cause. According to G.C. Pande, "disbelief in a creator and controller of the world-process may be called a characteristic trait of Śramaṇa thought."[3] Further, both adored deified saints, possessed a clergy practising celibacy and emphasized non-violence.

Because of these striking similarities it was argued by some earliy writers that the two religions were actually one and that Jainism was an off-shoot of Buddhism. According to Barth, there is such a great similarity between Buddha and Mahāvīra that we are instinctively led to conclude that 'one and the same person' is intended. Further, according to him, the similarities in the doctrines and history of their religions prove that one of two religions is a sect of the other.[4] But scholars like Colebrooke, Jacobi, Bühler, Guerinot, etc. conclusively proved that the two religions were different from each other. It is true that for many years Buddha and Mahāvīra were contemporaries but there is no doubt that they were different persons. Further, despite above similarities their religions show remarkable individualities, enjoyed patronage of separate kings and were never confused as one by the Brāhmaṇical authors.[5] Emerging as distinct

1. *Ibid.*, p. 441.
2. Pande, G. C., *op. cit.*, p. 542.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 543.
4. Barth, A., *The Religions of India*, London, 1882, pp. 148-50.
5. See Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

creeds in the sixth century B.C. they drifted further apart in the subsequent periods. In contrast with Buddhism, the Jaina doctrine attaches greater importance to ascetic practices. The austere discipline of mortifying the flesh, decried by Buddhism, acquires great importance in Jainism. Monastic disciplines of the two religions also show some important differences.[1] The divergence between the Jaina and Buddhist outlooks is reflected in many other aspects of these religions. Thus, while Buddhism advocates the *anatta* (no-soul) theory (at least according to the traditional schools), belief in the existence of innumerable souls is one of the basic doctrines of Jaina philosophy. It credits even inanimate objects like stones, trees, mountains, etc., with souls of varying degrees of consciousness. Again, with respect to the world (*loka*), the Buddhists held that we could neither speak of its eternity, nor of its annihilation, while the Jainas subscribed to the realistic view of the material world. Secondly, the Buddhist Nirvāṇa is defined as escape from existence while Jaina salvation assumes continued existence of disembodied soul in the state of perfection and bliss. The omniscience of the Kevalin has always been an important dogma with the Jainas. The Buddhists did not concede such a claim. Thirdly, the Jaina theory of *karman* is materialistic while the Buddhists regard karman as an immaterial psychological principle. The Buddhists stress the active aspect of karman as doing; the Jainas emphasize its mechanical aspect that comes forward in the *karmaphala*. The ideas about matter also differ considerably in the two religions and the emphasis on non-violence and non-accumulation are not carried to the same extreme in Buddhism as in Jainism. The Buddhists regarded *ahiṁsā* as positive mental attitude of *mettā* and *karuṇā* while the Jainas emphasized its negative aspect. Further, the Buddha denounced nudity, so strongly emphasized by Mahāvīra, and asked his followers to keep themselves 'properly clad'. These differences gave rise to a state of considerable rivalry and opposition among the adherents of the two religions.

1. Cf. Mishra, G.S.P., 'Some Reflections on Early Jain and Buddhist Monachism', *Jijñāsā*, Jaipur, I, Nos. 3-4, pp. 4-15.

Chapter 8

Śramaṇa Gautama and Early Buddhist Śramaṇism (i)

Life of the Buddha : Upto Enlightenment

The followers of the Buddha trace the roots of his teachings in the profound super-normal (*uttarimanussa*) realization of their great prophet. It is only natural for the adherents of a religion to credit the founder of their faith with powers of insight and penetration into the nature of truth and reality. But Hegel has familiarized us with the notion that great men are only the spokesmen of the 'ideas' of their age and that nebulous ideas of the day find their crystallization in a great man. According to this view, it will not be an exaggeration to maintain that the notion and criterion of what constitutes an element of originality in our thought is itself socially conditioned. The pursuit of this method is obviously essential in the interest of higher knowledge, but it should not imply the minimization of the genius of the great founders of religions. For example, in the case of the Buddha himself it would be a travesty of truth to attribute his pessimistic world-view to economic depression or political tyranny of his times. He was born as a prince and was brought up in ease and reasonable comfort. Therefore, the renunciation of the world by him and his *dukkhavāda* cannot, by any stretch of imagniation, be set down to the motive of escapism.[1]

A complete biography of the Buddha is not found in the Pali canon.[2] However, there are incidental references in the Nikāyas which shed some light on his personality and the events of his life.[3]

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1. Mookerjee, Satkari, in *Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. I, p. 589.

2. Cf. Warder, A.K., *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1970, p. 43. As the historicity of the Buddha is now fully established we are not discussing the views of those early scholars (such as R. Otto Franke, E. Senart and A. Barth) who doubted or rejected outright his historicity.

3. The *Ariyapariyesanāsutta*, sutta 36, *Mahāsachchakasutta*, sutta, 85, *Bodhirāja-*

An early form of the Sanskrit tradition is found in the collection of legends in the Tibetan scriptures, especially the *Vinaya.*[1] The *Mahāvastu*, belonging to the *Vinaya* of the Lokottaravādins, contains much legendary material for Buddha's biography. Its *Rāhula vatthu* is important for his early life. The *Lalitavistara* in its present form is a Mahāyāna sūtra, but contains some clearly old passages.[2] It gives a continuous narrative of Buddha's life. And finally, the *Abhinishkramaṇasūtra*, existing only in a Chinese translation and the *Buddhacharita* of Aśvaghosha may be mentioned.[3]

It seems that for the earlier disciples of the Buddha it was the doctrine which was the centre of interest, and not the teacher.[4] Therefore, certain evidence for Buddha's life is small; only its leading events and features can be historically delineated after removing the later legendary accretions.

Gautama Buddha, it is said in legends, came down to this world from the Tushita heaven where he was the presiding god. Before his advent into the world, he indicated the time, place and family which would suit him the best for appearing as a human being. He was born in 563 B.C.,[5] for his parinirvāṇa is now usually placed in 483 B.C. and he was eighty years old at that time. The place of his birth was Kapilavastu, the chief city of the Śākyas. It was situated probably near the place where the Lumbinī edict of Aśoka has been found.

The Śākyas are described as proud Khattiyas of pure decent. But at the same time the Brāhmaṇa gotra of Gotama is ascribed to them and the tradition of close inter-marriages is associated with them which indicates some non-Aryan affinities. They were an oligarchical clan with a popular assembly and elected chief. Their economic life, rural and agricultural in nature, was simple. Against this background the story of Buddha's having had in his early life three different palaces for the three seasons does not appear very plausible.[6] From the *Mahāvagga* the name of his father appears to

kumārasutta, sutta 100 and *Saṅgāravasutta* are important for the history of his exertions towards the attainment of truth.

1. Cf. Rockhill, W.W., *The Life of the Buddha*, 2nd edn., London, 1884.

2. Pande, *Origins*, p. 370.

3. Published in abridged trans. by S. Beal as *The Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha*, London, 1875.

4. Warder, *op. cit.*

5. Vide Goyal, S.R., *Māgadha Sāmrājya kā Udaya*, pp. 148-52 for a detailed study of the various theories regarding the date of the parinirvāṇa. Cf. also Upadhyaya, K.N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, Delhi, 1971, pp. 31-38.

6. Pande, G.C., *op. cit.*, p. 372.

have been Śuddhodana and that of his mother Māyā or Mahāmāyā, his own name being Siddhārtha. According to the *Chullavagga*,the mother of the Buddha died soon after his birth and he was brought up by Mahāprajāpati Gotamī who is described as the mother's sister (*mātuchcha*) of the Buddha in later legends. She is mentioned at several places in the *Vinaya* and the *Nikāyas*, but her relationship with Buddha is not explicitly specified in the latter.[1] According to a legend, Ṛshi Asita, who learnt of the birth of the Great Being by his divine insight, came to Kapilavastu and prophesied that the child would either become a sovereign ruler or a recluse, a Tathāgata, a Samyaksambuddha. But the prophecy of Asita has little claim to be regarded authentic.[2] On Buddha's education and the name of his wife,[3] the earliest records are silent. Rāhula figures as a monk at several places in the Nikāyas, but is not called Buddha's son. Only in the *Mahāvagga* a person of that name is sent by his mother to the Buddha to ask for his *dāyajja* ; but here the name of *Rāhulamātā* is missing.

At the age of twenty-nine the Buddha entered the homeless state. In the traditions it takes the form of highly pathos-ridden story which asserts that the crisis was caused by the first sight of old age, sickness, death and an ascetic. But, as G. C. Pande points out, it seems difficult to believe that the Siddhārtha could have lived for twenty-eight years without encountering sickness, old age, death and asceticism.[4] The *Ariyapariyesanāsutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* claims to record that he put on the yellow robes and went forth from his home to the homeless state against the wishes of his weeping parents. A sutta in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* informs us how through-eq reflection over the subjects of old age, sickness and death he lost all pride of youth, health and life. Thus, though the precise circumstances under which the actual *abhinishkramaṇa* took place are no longer known yet there seems no reason to believe that it was a sudden revolution in his life.[5]

The *abhinishkramaṇa* was followed by several years of wandering and seeking. He was invited by two Brāhmaṇa female hermits and then by Raivata Brahmaṛshi and Rajaka Tridaṇḍika to stay in their hermitages, which he politely refused.[6] The names of

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
3. Variously called Yaśodharā, Gopā, Biṁbā and Bhadda Kañchanā.
4. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 374.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, Calcutta, 1941, p. 87. The reference to Brāhmaṇa female hermits is interesting and significant.

only two teachers, Ārāḍa or Āḷāra Kālāma and Rudraka Rāmaputra or Uddaka Rāmaputta, under whom the Buddha sought spiritual instruction, are mentioned in the Nikāyas. On enquiry he learnt that Ārāḍa Kālāma had reached the seventh stage of meditation (*samāpatti*) called *akiñchaññayatana* (in which one's mind seeks nothing) while Uddaka Rāmaputta could rise to the eighth stage of meditation called *n'evasaññānāsaññāyatana* (in which the sense-perception was neither active nor dead).[1]

From there Gautama went to Gayāśīrsha Hill and found there many ascetics given to rigorous practices of self-mortification for spiritual elevation but he observed that they had not freed themselves wholly from worldly attachments and were far away from obtaining true insight and knowledge. Now he went to Uruvelāsenānīgāma on the bank of the river Nerañjanā. There he practised rigorous asceticism for six long years and realized that it would not lead to perfect knowledge. Thereupon, he decided to change his line of practices by taking food which he began with *khīra* (rice boiled with milk)of Sujātā (the daughter of a local senānī) who offered it to him thinking that he was a tree-god. It disappointed his five Brāhmaṇa ascetic-companions (the Pañchavargīya monks named Koṇḍañña, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahanāma, and Assaji) who left him in disgust. Now Gautama took his seat under the Bodhi tree with the determination that even if his body dries up he would not leave his seat without attaining sambodhi (Enlightenment). Māra tried to break his resolution but did not succeed. He gradually rose from the first to the fourth *jhāna* and visualised the highest Truth, the sambodhi, and thereby became fully enlightened, the Buddha, Samyaksambuddha or Prabuddha. According to some scholars, the tradition of Buddha attaining Enlightenment under the 'Bodhi tree' is just a piece of popular legend. According to Thomas, 'the whole story of the contest with Māra is a mythological development'.[2] Rhys Davids has seen in the Māra story 'a subjective reality'.[3] But, according to G. C. Pande, the struggle with Māra was 'really a pyschological struggle with secular temptations'.[4]

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1. For the view that the Buddha had been a Jaina Muni before Enlightenment see Jain, B. Bhagchandra, 'The Buddha and Buddhism', in *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, Nos. 1-2, pp. 18-20.

2. Thomas, E. J., *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History*, London, 1949, p. 74.

3. Quoted by Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

4. Pande, *op.cit.*

After obtaining Enlightenment the Buddha remained for some time[1] at the Bodhi tree enjoying *Vimuttisukha* (bliss of liberation). After this the *Mahāvagga* narrates the acceptance of Tapussa and Bhalika as lay-disciples, which is followed by the description of Buddha's hesitation to preach[2] (because the truth visualised by him was too deep and subtle to be comprehended by men of average intellect) and his final decision to engage in preaching at the entreaty of Brahmā (*Brahmayāchanā*). He resolved to preach the dhamma first to his former five Brāhmaṇa ascetic companions then dwelling at Isipattana or Sarnath, the deer-park near Banaras. With this began his career as a missionary, usually called setting into motion the wheel of law (*Dhammachakkapavattana*).[3]

Missionary Life of the Buddha

A systematic description of the traditional account of Buddha's missionary activities extending from his thirty-fifth year to the end of his life, has been given by Kern, Thomas, N. Dutt, etc. The tradition, however, is for the greater part post-canonical and much of it is uncertain in the absence of earlier evidence. As noted above, his missionary activity commenced at Sarnath where he imparted his teachings to his former companions, the five Brāhmaṇas. Very probably at Sarnath Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇīputra, Nālaka and Sabhiya, who were all recluses, also expressed appreciation of Buddha's teachings though they joined the *saṅgha* a little later, in the first or second year of Buddha's ministry. After this point no continuous narrative of Buddha's activities is found in the Nikāyas though the *Vinaya* describes the conversion of Yaśa and his friends, the sending forth of the first missionaries, the conversion of Kassapa (the leader of the Jaṭilas) and his disciples at Gayāśīrsha, the delivery of the Fire Sermon, the conversion of King Bimbisāra at Rājagṛha and the conversion of Sāriputta and Moggalāna. Ajātasattu, the son of Bimbisāra, does not appear to have been favourably disposed towards the Buddha at first. Towards the end of Buddha's life, however, he is said to have had a change of heart as a result of listening to the Sāmaññaphala-sermon. Among the Brāhmaṇas of Magadha the Buddha does not seen to have been very successful though among his lay devotees of this region were included a number of gāmaṇīs,

1. Variously mentioned as one, four or seven weeks.

2. *Origins*, p. 383.

3. For an interesting study of some of the common features in the life-stories of the Buddha and Mahāvīra see Malvania, Dalsukh D., *POC*, Gauhati Session, 1966, pp. 149-53.

seṭṭhīs, gahapatis, princes and princesses.

There is some evidence to show that the Śākyas were also not at first favourably disposed towards his teachings. The ordination of Rāhula is, however, mentioned in the *Vinaya* ; though the tradition regarding the conversion of Śuddhodana and the mother of Rāhula is of a later date.[1] Some youths of prominent Śākyan families also became his disciples and joined the Order. Among them were included Ānanda, Anuruddha, Bhaddiya, Kimbila, Nanda and Devadatta. Chaṇḍaka and Upāli followed the Śakyan nobles and joined the order of monks. Ānanda was the son of Amitodana, a brother of king Śuddhodana. Nanda was a step-brother of the Buddha. Devadatta was a cousin of the Buddha and the brother of Yaśodharā. Upāli, who became the repository of Vinaya rules, belonged to a barber family. Chaṇḍaka had been the attendant and charioteer of prince Siddhārtha.

In the fifth year of his ministry at the request of Mahāprajāpati and the intervention and persuasion of Ānanda, the Buddha approved the formation of the order of nuns, provided they agreed to the eight disabilities imposed by him (*infra*, Ch.9, section on Buddha's attitude to women).

King Pasenadi and queen Mallikā of Kosala are depicted in the Nikāyas as admirers of the Buddha. Princesses Somā, Sakulā and Sumanā too figure as interested in Buddhist doctrines. From the seṭṭhī class of Kosala the two most important names are those of Anāthapiṇḍika and Viśākhā—the daughter-in-law of Migāra (though called Migāramātā). The former is reported to have made the gift of the Jetavana vihāra and the latter of the Pubārāma Migāramātu-pāsāda.[2] Among the rich and influential Brāhmaṇas of this region who accepted the new faith the names of Jānussoṇi, Aggika Bhāradvāja, Dhānañjani, Pokkharasādi, Lohichcha and Chaṅkī may be mentioned. The most notable converts from among the Ājīvikas of Kosala were Vekhanassa and Poṭṭhapāda.[3]

Just as Sāvatthī was the headquarter of the Ājīvikas, so was Vesālī or Vaiśālī of the Niganṭhas. The most important success of the Buddha here was the conversion of the Niganṭha upāsaka Siha (Siṁhà)—a Lichchhavi general. From among the Bhaggas of Suṁsumāragiri came the three distinguished lay adherents[4]—the parents of Nakula and Bodhirājakumāra. The two most well-known

1. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 389.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 388.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 389.
4. *Ibid.*

converts from among the Mallas were Dabba Mallaputta and Chunda Kammāraputta. In Aṅga the Buddha is reported to have disputed with the Brāhmaṇa teacher Soṇadaṇḍa of Champā. Some discourses of the Buddha have been placed at Kosāmbī, Verañjā and the Kuru villages Kammāsadhamma and Thullakoṭṭhita.

Among the prominent personalities who accepted the faith of the Buddha the following also deserve mention : Mahākātyāyana (son of the royal priest of king Pradyota of Avanti), Mahānāma (the rich Śākyan relative of the Teacher), Ambapālī (a courtezan), Jyotishka (son of a fabulously rich banker of Rājagṛha), Jīvaka (a very renowned physician),Abhayarājakumāra (a son of king Bimbisāra), Śroṇa Koṭiviśa (son of a very rich banker of Champā), Nyagrodha (a distinguished Paribbājaka), Upāli (a gahapati of Nālandā), Pukkusāti (king of Takshaśilā), Kūṭadanta (a learned Brāhmaṇa), Pañchaśikha (a gandharva), Nandamātā (a distinguished lady), Keniya and Sela (two Jaṭila ascetics), Aṅgulimāla (a dacoit-son of the priest of king Prasenajit), Mahāli (a prominent Lichchhavi), Sachchaka (a teacher of the Lichchhavis), Jānussoṇi (a rich and distinguished Brāhmaṇa teacher), Vakkali (a celebrated Brāhmaṇa of Śrāvastī), Bāvarī (the royal priest of the king of Kosala), Sunakkhatta (a Lichchhavi prince of Vesālī), Subhūti (a nephew of Anāthapiṇḍika), Mahakoṭṭhita (a learned Brāhmaṇa), Piṇḍola Bharadvāja (a son of the priest of king Udena of Kosāmbī), Khemā (a queen of Bimbisāra) and Sāmāvatī (the daughter of a seṭṭhī).[1] From this list it is apparent that geographically the sphere of Buddha's activities embraced mainly the kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha. Among the lay disciples an important part seems to have been played by the moneyed and ruling classes. Women too figure prominently as nuns and lay devotees. Many Brāhmaṇas also entered the new Order, and there were followers from the lower classes too. The Saṅgha or Order of Monks was open to the people of all castes and all could join it on a footing of equality, except for government servants, debtors, slaves, certain kinds of proclaimed criminal offenders and those suffering from certain incurable physical defects.[2]

After completing his work of propagating his teachings and organizing the monastic institutions, the Buddha decided to enter the *Parinirvāṇa*. At that time Chunda, a blacksmith of Pāvā invited him to a meal of rice, cakes and *sūkaramaddava*. Scholars differ about the meaning of the last word. It was either a boar's tender flesh or

1. For details vide Dutt, N., *op. cit.*, pp. 116 ff.

2. Pande, *op. cit.*, pp. 390 -91.

some edible herb, probably the former. He ate it and fell ill. He breathed his last at Kusinārā or Kuśīnagara among the Mallas. His death took place at the age of 80 years on the full moon-day (Pūrṇimā) of Vaiśākha (May), as did his birth and awakening. The event was signified by an earthquake while Brahmā Sahampati and Sakka, the king of gods, expressed their sorrow by saying that all constituted beings and objects must have decay.[1] His remains were cremated with royal honours. A battle for the possession of his mortal remains for daily worship was stopped by Droṇa, a Brāhmaṇa. Eight stūpas were erected in different parts of India to house his relics.

Teachings of the Buddha : Four Noble Truths or Dukkhavāda

It is not possible to determine exactly what were the actual utterances of the Buddha. Doubts have been raised about Buddhism of the Tripiṭaka being essentially the teaching of the Buddha and much discussion now centres round the question of his original doctrine.[2] For example, some historians believe that he did not repudiate the belief in ātman or soul; others maintain that he did. Some hold that his ideas 'differed but little from the teachings of the Upanishadic sages'; others suggest that he taught a radical departure from the philosophy of these texts. Some have opined that he believed in the doctrine of saṁsāra while others have advocated that he 'rejected the doctine of transmigratin and taught merely the almost self-evident truism that one generation is affected by the deeds of the preceding one'. Further, some scholars attribute to him extreme pragmatism ignoring all dogma, while others deny it. Modern scholars also differ on the exact meaning of the terms *dukkha*, *pratītyasamutpāda*, *nibbāna*, etc. used in early Buddhism. Possibly there is some truth in the various views prevalent on the different aspects of Buddhism, but it also appears that there is a considerable amount of subjective element in them and a definite conclusion will always remain illusive and difficult to be reached.

According to N. Dutt, we may accept as original those teachings of the Buddha which are repeated at several places in the Nikāyas.[3] Most traditions agree about three or four suttas (e.g. the *Ariyapariyesanāsutta*, the *Dhammachakkapavattanasutta*, the *Mahā-*

1. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

2. For a detailed study of the controversy vide Pande, G. C., *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, Allahabad, 1957; Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1970; Varma, V. P., *Early Buddhism and Its Origins*, New Delhi, 1973.

3. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

parinibbānasutta) as having been delivered by the Buddha. They contain substantially all of his teachings. The *Ariyapariyesanāsutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* states that after the attainment of bodhi, the Buddha became hesitant to teach his dhamma mainly in connection with the theory of causation, known as Paṭichchasamuppāda. But the starting point of his religion is suffering (*dukkha*) which is actually the starting point of all Śramaṇic philosophies and what is sought after is nirvāna by following the Middle Path. The Buddha had obviously fallen under the influence of the prevailing philosophical mood of Dukkhavāda (sorrowism). He pondered deeply over the distressing phenomena of old age, disease, poverty, death and the various other forms of sorrow which are inherent in life. The first part of the *Dhamma-chakkapabattanasutta* contains the exposition of the Middle Path. In the second part of this sermon he explains his views about sorrow in the formulation of the famous Four Noble Truths (*Chattāri Ariya Sachchāni*) thus :

> 'Now this, O Monks, is the Noble Truth of Pain (*Dukkha*). Birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, sorrow, lamentation, defection, and despair are painful. Contact with unpleasant things is painful, not getting what one wishes is painful. In short, the five khandhas of grasping are painful.
>
> 'Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth of the cause of Pain (*Dukkha-samudaya*) : that craving (*taṇhā=tṛshṇā*) which leads to rebirth with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there, namely the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.
>
> 'Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth of the cessation of Pain (*Dukkha-nirodha*) : the cessation without remainder of that craving, abandonment, forsaking, release, unattachment.
>
> 'Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth of the Way that leads to the cessation of Pain (*Dukkha-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā*) : this is the Noble Eightfold Path (*Āryāshṭāṅgamārga*), namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. Thus,O monks, only doctrines unheard before, in me sight and knowledge arose, wisdom arose, light arose.'

To sum up, what the Buddha taught in the First Sermon at Isipattana was this : (a) that life, as it is generally lived, is inevitably mixed up with sorrow; through the gate of birth we pass into the valley of sorrow and pain; (b) that it is craving or desire that leads to

rebirth and hence to sorrow; (c) that in order to get rid of sorrow we must destroy its root cause, namely craving; and (d) that this can be done by following the Noble Eightfold Path.

Suffering originates from *taṇhā* or desire or thirst which has three aspects—*kāmataṇhā*, *bhavataṇhā* and *vibhavataṇhā*. In order to show their falsity the teachings of the undersirableness of sensual pleasures (*ādittapariyāya*), of no-soul theory (*anatta=anātmavāda*) and impermanence (*anichcha anitya*) were brought about. In the *ādittapariyāya* the world of sensual desires has been described as the world on fire, a world burning with the fires of *rāga* (attachment), *dosa* (vice) and *moha* (fondness).[1] Further, human beings desire to exist for ever without realizing the true nature of self. The Buddha struck at the root of this fallacy by his doctrines of *anatta* and *anichcha*. (*Infra*).

Various views have been advanced regarding the true meaning of *dukkha*. Stcherbatsky appears to believe that dukkha is unrest,[2] while actually unrest is only the outcome of *dukkha*, not *dukkha* itself. According to Coomaraswamy, 'Dukkha is to be understood both as symptom and disease.'[3] It was probably to reconcile such views that the Nikāyas speak of three kinds of *dukkhatā—dukkha dukkhatā* or the direct contact of the senses with unpleasureable feelings (e.g. when the skin is cut); *pariṇāma dukkhatā* or the feeling of pain emanating from the result of pleasure on account of its changeability and impermanence; and *saṅkhāra dukkhatā* which is connected with the doctrine of karman, for actions are ever in search of an opportunity to lead to pain either in this life or in the next.[4] The *Vinaya* in a qualified manner calls the five *upādānakhandhas* as *dukkha*. But as the world means nothing beyond them, some texts declare that all things are dukkha. The Kukkulavādins or the Gokulikas even denied the existence of *sukha saṁvedanā*. According to them, pleasure is nothing but merely the absence of pain. But the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins argue that it would be absurd to disbelieve in the existence of pleasure when one believes in the existence of pain. If there was no satisfaction to be found in the world, beings would not be attached to it. Therefore, the undesirability of pleasure only means the undesirability of *dukkha* inherent in it. The Buddha realized that

1. Mishra, G.S.P., *The Age of Vinaya*, New Delhi, 1972, p. 65.

2. Quoted by Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 66; cf. also Saddhatissa, 'Dukkha, the First Noble Truth', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, pp. 78-79.

3. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, London, 1916, p. 83.

4. Mishra, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

pain cannot be conceived without pleasure, but he concluded that as pleasure too results in pain, it should not be aspired for.[1]

It has been suggested by Kern that the formula of the Four Noble Truths was borrowed by Buddhism from medical science.[2] In the *Vyādhisūtra* the Four Truths have been compared with their medical counterparts—disease, diagnosis, cure and medicine and in the *Lalitavistara* the Buddha has been attributed the epithet 'Vaidyarāja'.[3]

That the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths was included in the original teachings of the Buddha can hardly be doubted.[4] The weight and importance attached to it in all texts proves it, though Mrs. Rhys Davids held a contrary view.[5] But her skepticism has not met general approval. 'A dissatisfaction with the existent set-up is the necessary preceding state for a reform in any field; Buddha saw something wrong with the world around him and he proceeded to find out what is lacked and needed.'[6] Similarly, her view that the word dukkha used in the texts points merely to the ills of body and mind and lacks a conception of ills in the spiritual realm,[7] does not seem to be convincing. According to G.C. Pande, "such expressions as define dukkha in terms of birth, disease, old age and death should... be understood symbolically, not literally. When the Buddhist, contemplating life, was sorely distressed to see its limitation and uncertainties, he was surely feeling what may be called spiritual discontent... he did not mean merely to speak of a discontent of body and mind, but rather of discontent with body and mind, and this latter is the form of all spiritual discontent."[8]

The dukkhavāda of Buddhism, and also of Jainism, did not evolve from the early Vedic religion. The Ṛgvedic people wanted to live a full life of hundred years and more. But in the Upanishads the theme of the burden of the world with its fatalities and contradictions

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

2. Kern, H., *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, Strassburg, 1896, pp. 67-68.

3. Quoted by Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

4. Oldenberg, H., *Buddha*, Calcutta, 1927, pp. 197-98; Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha*, p. 173; Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, Delhi, 1983, p. 5.

5. Rhys Davids, Mrs. C.A.F., *Gotama the Man*, London, 1928, pp. 147-48; idem, *What Was the Original Gospel in Buddhism?*, p. 378.

6. Mishra, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

7. Rhys Davids, C.A.F., *What Was the Original Gospel in Buddhism ?*, pp. 56-57.

8. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 403; cf. Thera, C. Nayanasatta, '*Dukkha*, Contemplation of Suffering', *World Buddhism*, XL, No. 7, p. 21.

begins to weigh heavily upon the minds of the thinkers. Sometimes they explicitly say that everything else is full of sorrow—*anyad-ārtam.* However, they looked upon the worldly sorrows against the background of the plentitude of bliss of Brahman. Secondly, the Upanishadic passages which refer to the miserable character of the world are not many. The *Kaṭha Upanishad* contains the word *lokadukkha* but this text is a comparatively late composition. There are pessimistic strains in the *Maitrāyaṇī* but it is regarded as post-Buddhistic.[1] Some of the greatest names in the Upanishads are those of householders and kings. Ushasta Chākrāyaṇa, Uddālaka Āruṇi and Satyakāma Jābāla lived the normal lives of peaceful householders. Raikva was notorious for his love of gifts and fees. Yājñavalkya accepted plenty of cows and gold from king Janaka. They all engaged themselves in philosophical discussions but felt no urgency to renounce the world.

Here, it may also be noted that the Buddha had himself "rejected outright all those views which might be generalised as *Āstika* (Belief in the existence of the Supreme God, the Creator), *Nāstika* (Annihilationism as also Materialism), and *Daiṣṭika* (Determinism or Fatalism) or as *Śāśvata* (Eternalism) and *Uccheda* (Nihilism) or a mixture of the two (Partial Eternalism and Partial Nihilism). He did not expressly refer to the *Upaniṣads* or to the philosophy embodied in them but it is clear that he was fully cognizant of the Brahmaṇical view of *Jīvātman* and *Paramātman* and also of the theory of the origin of the world of beings... .There are, however, clear and repeated assertions that the only reality is *Nibbāna*, which is not mere negation of everything (*abhāvamātra*) and that all the constituted objects of the world are unreal."[2]

Historically, the origin of Buddhism may be seen in the non-Vedic Śramaṇism, the ideology of *nivṛtti*, the existence of which has been traced even in the early Vedic and Indus Civilizations.

Various theories have been advanced for explaining the emergence of dukkhavāda in Indian philosophy. According to the psychoanalytic theory, the roots of the theory of dukkha are to be found in the psychological neuroses of Buddha himself. He was an extraordinarily sensitive and tender personality. The story, according to which the all-pervasive sorrow which appeared to reveal itself to him through the old man, the diseased man and the corpse, was only an exaggerated interpretation put upon a commonplace

1. *Origins*, pp. 575 ff. The *Maitrāyaṇī* contains allusions to Buddhism.
2. Dutt, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-34.

phenomenon.[1] According to another explanation, the dulling and enervating effects of the eastern regions were responsible for the philosophy of Upanishads and the dukkhavāda of Buddhism both.[2] A third, anthropological, explanation of Buddhist dukkhavāda is found in the theory of racial admixture. According to Griswold, for example, the racial fusion of the Aryans and Dravidians was possibly the cause of the melancholy temperament of the Indians.[3] A fourth explanation is offered by the Marxist philosophy which believes that the pessimistic ideology of despair and nullity was preached by the exponents of the interests of the dominant classes in order to benumb the zeal and revolutionary fervour of the suppressed strata. For example, Rāhula Sāṁkṛtyāyana makes three factors responsible for the Upanishadic gloom: (a) suppressed sense of revolt of the exploited; (b) social inequalities; and (c) internal quarrels among the exploiting sectons.[4] On the other hand, some scholars emphasize the elements of unhappiness brought about by the political upheavals and vicissitudes of the period. For example, according to Stevenson, the notion of dukkha emphasized in Buddhism and other contemporary systems was a theoretical formulation of an actual concrete miserable situation.[5] Men hoped to evade the avaricious fingers of the king by renouncing everything that could be taken from them. According to Coomaraswamy,[6] however, the pessimism of Buddhism and other philosophies was the result of the accumulation of philosophical experience. At times a philosophical proble into the nature and procession of the world does indicate immensity of suffering. A philosophy that teaches that things are as they should be is no philosophy at all. Buddha's stress on the dark side of the phenomena of the world was based upon his perceptions and experiences. Thus, the Buddhist dukkhavāda was the result also of the intuitional experience of its founder,[7] though factors discussed above also played their role.

1. Cf. Wells, H. G., *The Outline of History*, New York, 1931, p. 390; Streeter, B.H., *The Buddha and the Christ*, London, 1932, p. 62; cf. also Griswold, H.G., in *ERE*, IX, p. 812.

2. Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, p. 264; cf. Tagore, Rabindranath, *Sādhanā*, Ch. 1; Melamed, *Spinoza and Buddha*, p. 235; Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads*, II, p. 469.

3. Griswold, *op. cit.*

4. *Darśana Digdarśana*, pp. 382 ff.

5. Stevenson, S., *The Heart of Jainism*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 3.

6. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, p. 180.

7. Varma, V. P., *op. cit.*, p. 137.

Pratītyasamutpāda (Law of Causation)

Pratītyasamutpāda or the law of dependent origination was a great contribution of the Buddha to the philosophical thought of India of the 5th century B.C.[1] *Pratīyasamutpāda* (Pali, *Paṭichchasamuppāda*) means that every object or being is subject to dissolution and the objects that dissolve appear (*samutpāda*) again and again (*Pratītya-samutpāda=idaṁ sati idaṁ hoti* — this being so, that happens). It is also called the law of *Idaṁpratyayatā* or *Idappachchayatā* (=the things of this world are conditioned or interdependent), and also *Majjhima Dhamma* (= The Middle Path).

The Buddha is stated to have discovered the Truth of Paṭichchasamupāda during his Sambodhi, and finding it too difficult and subtle for ordinary comprehension, to have hesitated in preaching it. He agreed to preach it only after he was requested to do so by Brahmā (Brahmayāchanā). That the formula is the most ancient one and in some form or the other goes back to the Buddha himself is proved by the conversation which took place only a few months after the Enlightenment between Sāriputta, then a non-Buddhist wanderer, and Arhat Assaji. When questioned by the former the latter defines the dhamma briefly thus: "The Tathāgata has explained the origin of those things which proceed from a cause. Their cessation too he has explained. This is the doctrine of the Great Śramaṇa."[2] (*Ye dhammā hetuprabhavā tesaṁ hetuṁ Tathāgato āha. Tesaṁ cha yo nirodho evaṁ vādī Mahāsammaṇo*). Probably it was from such a brief formula that the detailed chain of causation was later on postulated. In any case, all sects of Buddhism agree on its significance and it has been identified with Dhamma and the Buddha in ancient sayings as well as later texts both of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. "The universally recognized importance of the idea, its equal obscurity, and its occurrence in some of the most ancient passages of the Nikāyas testify to its authenticity."[3]

As the 'Middle Doctrine' Paṭichchasamuppāda seeks to avoid both Sat and Asat, Being (*Atthita*) and Non-Being (*Natthita*). "It denies that things are just, pure and immutable, or that they are a nihil. It denies Eternalism (Sassatavāda), Nihilism (Ucchedavāda), Fortuitionism (Adhiccasamuppāda), and anthropomorphic, or

1. Cf. Gokhale, V.V., 'Gotama's Vision of Truth', *Brahmavidyā*, Adyar, XXX, pp. 105-21.

2. Bhikshu Sangharakshita, in *The Cultural History of India*, ed. A.L. Basham, Oxford, 1975, p. 85.

3. *Origins*, p. 412.

dynamic causality. ... Paṭiccasam⁰ appears now as a law relating to events which do not happen in isolation. It thus resolves the world into a procession, and sees a necessary order in its sequence."[1] Thus, for the Buddha, becoming was an undeniable and extremely significant fact about the finite world. By this law he sought to establish that the world was "neither a creation of God nor its origin was accidental nor it was issued out of the ever existing Prakṛti nor it was a composite of eternal atoms (*aṇuparamāṇu*) nor was it pre-determined as held by the Ājīvikas."[2] Further, it sought to prove that the world was caused and not uncaused and that it is "in a dynamic state and is never static even for a moment. In other words, it is only a series of point-instants. From this it follows that the beings and objects of the world have only dependent origination and hence they are impermanent and sources of misery, and that except *Nibbāna* and *Ākāśa*, there is nothing that is not originated by sequence of causes and conditions. This law also shows that all that is thus caused and conditioned is evanescent and without any substance. It explains the fixed, unchangeable and this-conditioned (*idappaccayatā*) nature of beings and objects."[3] For the Buddha all phenomenal objects have existence though it is only mementary (*kshaṇika*), similar to waves of the sea. These waves are not purely imaginary, and do exist, but only for a moment; hence they are impermanent (*anitya*).

Thus, the Buddha inculcated the belief that the universe is *anichcha* (impermanent or ever-changing). At the same time he maintained that it is dukkha and in startling opposition to the Upanishadic philosophy also apparently taught that it is *anatta*, i.e. without a non changing, abiding entity called attā (*ātman*) or soul (*infra*) and that it is the non-comprehension (*avijjā*) or only partial grasping of this three-fold nature of the universe that gives rise to *taṇhā* and ultimately leads to sorrows.[4]

In the Buddhist texts such as *Mahānidānasūtra* an attempt has been made to elaborate the theory of Pratītyasamutpāda or causation by a chain of factors that elucidate the relationship between *avijjā* (ignorance) and *dukkha* (sorrow): from ignorance (*avijjā*) arises imagniation (*saṁkhāra*), from imagination arises consciousness (*vijñāna*), from consciousness arise name and form (*nāmarūpa*), from name and form arises the sphere of the six (*shaḍāyatana*), from the

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 423-24.
2. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Warder, A.K., *op.cit.*, pp. 106 ff.

sphere of the six arises contact (*phassa* or *sparśa*), from contact arises sensation (*vedanā*), from sensation arises craving (*taṇhā*), from craving arises grasping (*upādāna*), from grasping arises becoming (*bhava*), from becoming arises birth (*jāti*) and from birth as cause arise old age, death, grief, lamentation, pain, dejection and despair. So long *avijjā* and craving are not overcome the cycle of rebirths (*saṁsāra*) will continue and there will be no emancipation from the shackles of sorrow implied in birth. With the cessation of ignorance and craving, the necessity of rebirth will come to an end, and the state of emancipation, Nirvāṇa, will be reached.[1]

Paṭichchasamuppāda is commonly supposed to represent Buddha's explanation of suffering. Jacobi's suggestion[2] that this formula was derived from the Sāṅkhya scheme of evolution was endorsed by Schrader while Senart posited the influence of Yoga.[3] It is of course true that the Sāṅkhya, like Buddhism, sees the origin of Dukkha in desire-promoted actions, and the origin of desire in some sort of 'ignorance', but, as pointed out by G.C. Pande, the idea of *avidyā* is in a way common to all systems of Indian philosophy. According to him, "the comparison between the Sāṅkhya scheme of the Tattvas and Pratītyasamutpāda appears to be forced."[4]

Modern opinions differ also on the significance of the theory of Paṭichchasamuppāda. Keith thought that the chain aimed at explaining the origin of evil, and that it does not denote a causation in nature.[5] On the other hand, T.W. Rhys Davids considered the formula as the first clear enunciation in history of the principle of natural causality in all phenomena.[6] C.A.F. Rhys Davids too takes the formula as an expression of law exactly in the sense that *ṛta* and *vrata* were used in the earlier periods but had come into disuse because the gods with whom they were associated had lost their imporance.[7] Oldenberg believes that the formula of 'the Causal Nexus of Being' was drawn up to strengthen the tenets regarding the origin and cessation of suffering.[8] Coomaraswamy enunciates the idea more clearly when he says that "it is the grasp of the very fact that we are mechanisms,

1. Cf. Baptist, E.C., 'Buddhist Law of Dependent Origination', *Buddhist*, Colombo, XXXII, pp. 161-64; *ibid.*, XXXVII, No. 4, pp. 100-03.

2. Quoted in *Origins*, p. 407.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Buddhist Philosophy*, Oxford, 1923, p. 112.

6. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues*, II, pp. 42 ff.

7. Rhys Davids, C.A.F., *Gotama the Man*, pp. 77-78.

8. *Buddha*, pp. 226-27.

causally determined... that points out the way of escape."[1]

Significantly, for the Buddha the realization of Truth or Sambodhi consists of Pratītyasamutpāda and Nirvāṇa both. In the passage within the Brahmayāchanā context, the Buddha dichotomised his Dhamma into Paṭichchasam^0 and Nibbāna. According to Pande, "Since Nibbāna is apparently the final principle or experience, paṭiccasam^0 may be designated as the principle of non-ultimate experience."[2] The relation between the two seems parallel to the relation between Brahma and Māyā in the philosophy of Śaṅkara.

The Problem of Soul (Attā)

There are three basic doctrines of early Buddhism—sorrowism (*dukkhavāda*), impermanence (*anityatā*) and non-soulism (*anātmavāda*). Since there is nothing permanent and everything is in a state of flux, it automatically follows that the soul as a self-subsisting entity does not exist.[3] Soon after the *upasampadā* of the Pañchavargīya Bhikshus the Buddha gave a discourse to them on the theory of anātman (*anatta*) and emphatically stated that *rūpa*, *saṁjñā* (*saññā*), *vedanā*, *saṁskāra* (*saṅkhāra*) and *vijñāna* (*viññāna*) do not constitute the self. The belief in the existence of soul, or, in other words, the heresy of individuality (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) is due to the misapprehension of one of the five constituents (*khandhas*) as the soul.[4] Many other texts preach the doctrine of *anatta*. In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, when Ānanda asks the Buddha the meaning of the phrase 'the world is empty', the latter replies, "That is empty Ānanda, of a self or of anything of the nature of a self. And what is that is thus empty ? The five seats of the five senses, and the mind, and the feeling that is related to mind all these are void of a self or of anything that is self-like."[5] In the *Majjhima Nikāya* the doctrine of the permanence of soul is called a foolish doctrine. What is liable to pain and corruption cannot be the self of a thing.[6]

It is thus evident that the Buddha explicitly denied the self in the phenomenal realm. To this extent his views were not opposed to the orthodox Brāhmaṇical views as expounded in the Upanishads. For what he here denies is that any of the *khandas* may have *attā*, not

1. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, New York (no date), p. 80, n. 225.
2. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 414.
3. Mahathera, Saddhatissa, H., 'The Anatta Doctrine', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, Nos. 9-10, pp. 194-96.
4. Dutt, N., *op. cit.*, p. 232.
5. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, IV. 54.
6. *Majjhima Nikāya*, I. 138.

the *attā* as such. But what about the transcendent-immanent self as inculcated in the Upanishads ? Different scholars answer this question differently. According to Stcherbatsky and Rāhula Sāṁkṛtyāyana, the Buddha did not believe in the existence of soul of any type. His dhamma was thoroughly *anattavādī*.[1] According to T.W. Rhys Davids, at the time of the Buddha there were prevalent in North India animistic, polytheistic, patheistic and dualistic views. The belief in *attā* or soul was fundamental for all of them. The Buddha not only ignored it but regarded it as a hindrance in spiritual progress.[2] According to Vidhushekhar Shastri, the denial of soul by the Buddha emanated from the fact that he found in his experience nothing that paralleled the supposed characteristics of the Ātman, viz. independence, permanence and blissfulness.[3] According to Poussin, in the Pali literature there are many passages supporting *anattavāda* but a few which support the idea of *attā*.[4] Hegel regarded Buddhism as a creed of final negation.[5] Edward Caird interpreted Buddhism as a doctrine of Nirvāṇic extinction. Streeter and Melamed interpret Buddhism as a negative creed which denied the soul and the world.[6] Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids also in her earlier works put a negativist interpretation on the Buddhist *anatta*.[7]

However, according to Schrader, the Buddha appeared as a 'soul-denier' to his contemporaries only because they conceived of the soul in an extremely anthropomorphic fashion, speaking of its form, weight, colour, etc.[8] In her later writings Mrs. Rhys Davids[9] has most vigorously supported the view that the Buddha did not propound the 'No-soul' theory and that it was a later monkish

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1. Sāṁkṛtyāyana, R., *Bauddha Darśana*, Allahabad, 1962, pp. 22-23; Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism*, London, 1922; Malalasekera, G.P., 'The Unique Doctrine of Buddhism', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, Nos. 5-6, pp. 63-69.

2. Rhys Davids, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 29; *Buddhism*, pp. 95-99.

3. Quoted in *Origins*, p.482.

4. Poussin, 'The Ātman in the Pali Canon', *Indian Culture*, II, 1935-36, pp. 821-24.

5. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, pp. 167-72.

6. All quoted by Varma, *op.cit.*, pp. 154-55.

7. Cf. her early works *Buddhism, a Study of the Buddhist Norm*, 1912, and *Buddhist Psychology*, 1914; also see her paper, 'Soul Theory in Buddhism', *JRAS*, 1903.

8. Quoted in *Origins*, p. 483.

9. Cf. her *Gotama the Man*, 1928; *What Was the Original Gospel in Buddhism?*; *Śākya or Buddhist Origins*, 1931, etc.

develoment, an imposition on the original gospel under the influence of the hostility toward the Brāhmaṇas. Commenting on a verse of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, which she compares with a passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, she states : "I believe it is far more likely that the original speaker of the verse used *attā* in the sense in which the original speaker of the Upaniṣad utterance used *ātman*."[1] The view has been reiterated *mutatis mutandis* by Coomaraswamy[2] and Radhakrishnan.[3] At one place Radhakrishnan categorically says : "It is however wrong to think that there is no self at all according to Buddha. ... The Upaniṣads arrive at the ground of all things by stripping the self of veil after veil of contingency. At the end of this process they find the universal self, which is none of these finite entities, though the ground of them all. Buddha holds the same view, though he does not state it definitely."[4] According to Sogen[5] and Suzuki[6] also, the Buddha denied the soul in the sense of a finite substantial individual but not in the sense of the absolute unity of the universe. The arguments of the scholars who generally claim that the Buddha did not deny the existence of soul as a transcendental entity (though their views differ in detail) may be summarized as under :

(1) Mrs. Rhys Davids has argued that if the Buddha had raised a revolt against the theory of soul as accepted in the Upanishads, he would have brought it forward while in controversy with the learned Brāhmaṇas, which he did not do.

(2) There are some compound words which occur in early texts in which the word *atta* or *attā* is used in a sense different from that of man as a complex of body and mind only. Such are *Ajjhatta*, *Pachchatta*, *Attabhāva*, *Pahitatta* and *Bhāvitatta*. According to G.C. Pande, at least in the first of these compounds the argument has some weight. The belief of the Buddha in the existence of *attā* may also be deduced from the statement in the Mallikā section of the *Kosala Saṁyutta* according to which the *attā* is the dearest in the whole world and that an 'attakāma' should not injure another. In a

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1. Quoted by Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

2. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*; cf. Gour, H., *The Spirit of Buddhism*, p. 285.

3. *Indian Philosophy*, I, pp. 386-89; cf. also Chatterji, J.C., 'Buddha and the Ātman', *Prabuddha Bhārata*, LXIII, No. 3, pp. 91-98.

4. *Op. cit.*, p. 388; cf. Bahm, Archie, J., 'Was Gautama a Buddhist', *Bulletin of Ram Krishna Mission Institute of Culture*, XV, pp. 9-15.

5. Sogen, Y., *Systems of Buddhist Thought*, 1912.

6. Suzuki, D. T., *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 1927.

few passages *attā* is used in the sense of the 'inner monitor' or conscience.[1] In the *Mahāvagga* the Buddha asks thirty Bhadravargīya bhikshus to make a search after soul—*attānaṁ gaveseyyātha*. In the *Mahāpari-nirvāṇasūtra* the words *ātmadīpa* and *ātmaśaraṇa* are used to exhort the bhikshus to regard the *attā* as their light and refuge.[2] However, here the aim of the Buddha appears to emphasize individual efforts; the existence of a metaphysical soul need not be regarded as necessarily implied.

(3) In the *Dharmachakrapravartanasūtra* delivered at Sarnath the Buddha said that what is evil and painful cannot be the *ātman*. The supporters of Buddhist *attavāda* argue that this denial of self-hood to the phenomenal modes implies the indirect positing of the reality of the transcendent superior 'I'.

(4) One of the grounds in support of ātmavāda in Buddhism is the belief in heavens and hells which are frequently mentioned in the Tripiṭakas. If after death one goes to heaven or hell in accordance with its merit or demerit, then it necessarily follows that there must first be a soul. In the *Dhammapada* the Buddha condemns a liar to hell. He himself is said to have visited the various *lokas*. The belief in the existence of heavens and hells would become meaningful only if one concedes the existence of soul.

(5) Another proof which supports a positive interpretation of *attā* in Buddhism is its emphasis on *dhyāna*. Without positing a spiritual principle it is impossible to explain the ascending scales of mystical consciousness.[3]

(6) There are a number of references in the Buddhist scriptures to the blissful nature of nirvāṇa. In the *Dhammapada*, nirvāṇa is described as the state of highest happiness. In the *Theragāthā* and the *Therigāthā* also the rapturous and ecstatic state of nirvāṇic bliss is described. These descriptions do not fit in with a negativistic notion of the final destiny of man.

(7) According to some texts, what survives a man's death is his *chitta* or *viññāna*. The doctrine is almost certainly pre-Buddhist. The Buddha seems to have modified rather than rejected it. *Viññāna* doubtlesss exists after death but it is not a permanent entity. It is in fact extremely changeable. But in nirvāṇa its fluctuations cease and it rests in its own natural infinity and luminosity. Thus, *viññāna*

1. *Origins*, p. 488.

2. Cf. Coomaraswamy, in *JRAS*, 1938, pp. 680-81.

3. Rhys Davids, C. A. F., 'Dhyāna in Early Buddhism', *IHC*, III, 1927, pp. 689-715.

resembles the ātman of some Upanishadic texts.[1]

(8) In the *Dhammapada*, *attā* is described as an entity which is very near and dear. Essentially self-dependent, it has great potentiality for good and for evil. It is not only the same as *chitta*, it is also the man behind mind, in a way identical with it but in another something more than it.[2]

(9) Mid-way between the Purusha of the Upanishads and the Puggala of the Nikāyas is the expression Purisa-puggala. According to G.C. Pande, "it signifies the individual acting, believing and experiencing the results of his acts." The Buddha himself gave sermons on puggalas of various classes. Usually the usage Purisa-puggala does not indicate a belief in self but the well-known *Bhārahāra sutta* is an exception, for it clearly distinguishes between puggala and khandhas and describes the latter as burden of the former.[3]

(10) In the famous Buddhist formula of *triśaraṇa* there is the surrender to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. If the Buddha was completely extinct after the parinirvāṇa then there would seem no sense in making a surrender to him.

When asked directly, the Buddha is reported to have refused to answer the question about the existence of the *ātman* either positively or negatively. According to Keith[4] and Pussin,[5] it was the result of his 'agnosticism',[6] while, according to Rosenberg, the Buddha did not answer this question simply because the word *ātman* was meaningless for him.[7] Stcherbatsky's view that it was a custom in Buddha's time to remain silent when one wanted to answer negatively, is groundless.[8] According to G. C. Pande, in this regard the Mādhyamika approach seems to be the only correct one. When the Buddha did not speak positively or negatively about the *ātman* or the *Tathāgata*, he indicated his position most precisely. "Ātman and Anātman, existence and non-existence do not possess ultimate adequacy. One must avoid such 'extreme' or categorical

1. *Origins*, pp. 494-95; cf. Wijesekara, O.H. De A., 'The Concept of Viññāna in Theravāda Buddhism', *JAOS*, 84, No. 3, pp. 254-59.

2. *Origins*, p. 488; cf. Shukla, Karunesh, 'Ātman in Buddhist Philosophy', *Poona Orientalist*, XXVII, Nos. 3-4, pp. 114-32.

3. *Origins*, p. 490.

4. Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pp. 39-46.

5. Poussin, in *ERE*, I, under 'Agnosticism'.

6. Perera, T. H., 'Was Lord Buddha an Agnostic ?', *Buddhist*, XXXVII, No. 5, pp. 137-39.

7. Quoted in *Origins*, p. 505.

8. Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 506.

characterizations and try to follow the Middle Path in Metaphysics as in Ethics."[1] "...Nirvāṇa remains indescribable in terms of finite consciousness, for it is absolutely infinite. One describes it best by preserving 'silence', for, to say anything about it would be to make it relational and finite. On the theoretic side, Buddha appears to have adhered to this position so rigorously that his 'silence' has become enigmatic for all ages. For practical guidance, however, he not only indicated that the Absolute alone is eternal and beatific but also suggested a way to its direct realization. This attitude is clearly more 'mystical' than rational."[2] All this "cumulatively suggests an Absolutist position and supports the Mādhyamika interpretation. And this is hardly surprising, since, already before Buddha, Absolutism is in unmistakable terms expressed in the Upaniṣads."[3]

Skandha Theory and the Doctrine of Rebirth

The Doctrine of *saṁsāra* or rebirth has a prominent place in the ancient systems of Indian thought. Most of the Indian religions adhere to it in some form or the other. On anthropological evidence it is believed that some of the prehistoric races of India held a rudimentary notion of the continuity of dead person in some form or the other.[4] According to Poussin, "The belief in reincarnations was a purely savage surmise."[5] Bohtlingk, Ernst Windisch, Pischel, Geldner, Swami Dayananda, Ranade, etc. believe that the concept of *punarjanma* is as old as the Brāhmaṇa texts. Some of them find it in a vague form even in the *Ṛgveda*.[6] This has rightly been questioned. According to Oldenberg, Macdonell, S. Lévi, Bloomfield, Hopkins and G. C. Pande, the idea of *punarjanma* was developed only in the age of the Upanishads. There are absolutely no traces of the doctrine of rebirth in the *RV*.[7] According to the Vedic poets, after death the souls reside in the world of Yama. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 1. 5. 3. 4 is supposed to contain a dubious allusion to the concept of

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 507-08.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 510; cf. Bhattacharya, Bidhushekhar, 'The Doctrine of Ātman and Anātman', *POC*, V, 1930, II, pp. 1002-06.

3. *Origins*, p. 509.

4. Goyal, S.R., *A Religious History of Ancient India*, Vol. I, Meerut, 1984, Ch.1.

5. Poussin, *The Way to Nirvāṇa*, p. 18.

6. Hopkins says, "...metempsychosis is also known in a vague form in the Ṛgveda" (*Hindu Ethics*, p. 44). Bohtlingk also finds allusions to rebirth in the *RV*, 1.164, 30-32. Ranade supports him.

7. Keith, *RPV*, II, pp. 570-71.

transmigration, but, as G. C. Pande has shown, the usual attitude of the Brāhmaṇa texts towards after-life does not assume such a doctrine. The doctrine of transmigration "has ever been closely and essentially bound up with a number of other ideas" such as "belief in an innately immaculate and immortal conscious principle, recognition of the law of karman and deep-seated urge for Mukti."[1] Now, the Brāhmaṇa texts conceived soul in close connection with body and never thought it to be naturally immortal.The law of karman was also quite beyond the ken of their priests and their concept of immortality is just that of endless duration in a changeful world of sensuous enjoyment. Therefore, it is hardly possible to imagine that the priests of the Brāhmaṇa texts knew and were responsible for the doctrine of rebirth.[2]

According to G. C. Pande, the doctrine of rebirth originated among the munis and śramaṇas of the Vedic age.[3] From them it was adopted by the Upanishadic thinkers. In the *Kaṭha Upanishad* there is a clear exposition of the belief in the transmigration of soul. Rebirth is regarded as being determined by one's intellectual and moral attainments. In this text there is the famous dialogue between Yama and Nachiketā in which Yama remarks that a being is reborn just as a ripened corn after decay reappears again.[4] In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* soul is described as a link between death and rebirth because it passes from one existence to another.[5] Buddhism accepts this concept of rebirth but unlike Upanishadic thinkers rejects the notion of the transmigration of a spiritual entity. According to Buddhism, it is the rebirth of personality or of the psycho-physical complex—the *nāmarūpa skandhas.* As believers in the law of causation the Buddhists deliberately avoided the question of the existence of an entity,which becomes subject to feeling (*vedanā*), desire (*taṇhā*), strong attachment (*upādāna*), and desire for re-existence (*bhava*) and rebirth (*jāti*). According to them, beings and inanimate objects of the world are *saṁskṛta*, so described on account of their being constituted of some elements, as distinguished from nirvāṇa, the *asaṁskṛta* (the unconstituted). The constituted elements are put under two heads : *nāma* and *rūpa, nāma* denoting the non-material or mental constituents of a being, while *rūpa* denoting the

1. *Origins*, p. 283.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 284-85:

3. For a similar view see Upadhyaya, K.N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 68-70.

4. *Kaṭha.*, 1.1.20.21.

5. *Bṛ. Upa.*, IV. 4.3.5.

material only. All inanimate objects therefore are included in the term *rūpa*.[1] *Nāma* is analysed into four mental states namely *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhāra* (resultant impressions produced through karman) and *viññāna* (knowledge derived through the organs of senses) while the Rūpakkhandha denotes the four elements : earth (*pathavi*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*) and air (*vāyu*), including all that is formed out of these four. The four subdivisions of *nāma* with the fifth the *rūpa* are termed Pañchakhandhas. Every being and object is a composite of these five khandhas (skandhas or groups of elements), without a sixth, the puggala or *attā* (=soul).[2] A living being composed of five *skandhas* is beginningless, and is in a continuous state of flux, each preceding group of *skandhas* giving rise to a subsequent group of *skandhas*, and this process is going on momentarily and ceaselessly in the present existence as it will go on also in the future until the eradication of *avidyā* and the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. The Buddhists describe this process as rebirth and not transmigration and deny the existence of soul which supposedly passes from one existence to another like the caterpillar from one blade of grass to another.[3]

Theory of Karman

Karmavāda or theory of moral determinism represents one of the prime themes in Indian philosophical speculations and social life. The ordinary meaning of karman is deed or action. At a more comprehensive level it connotes motivation behind the action.[4] The Vedic seers adhered to the belief in *ṛta*—the cosmic law of harmony and order. This order was recognized not merely as a mechanical uniformity but as emanating from a superior moral force symbolised by the god Varuṇa. In the age of the Brāhmaṇas, the growth of the sacrificial religion hindered the emergence of the concept of karman.[5] As pointed out by G. C. Pande, "the idea of an inflexible moral law extending far beyond the grave" was quite beyond the ken of the priests of the Brāhmaṇa-books.[6] 'Karman' meant to them simple 'ritual act'. The other world is doubtless made (*kṛta*) but made by sacrifice.[7] It was in the age of the early Upanishads that the theory of

1. Dutt, *op.cit.*, p. 197.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 227-28; cf. Rashtrapala, Bhikshu, 'The Buddhist Doctrine of Rebirth', *World Buddhism*, XIV, No. 3, pp. 3-5.

4. Cf. Poussin, 'Karma', in *ERE*, VII, pp. 673-77.

5. *Contra* Varma, *op.cit.*, p. 215.

6. Pande, *Origins*, p. 284.

7. *Ibid.*, n. 190.

karman made its emergence. Garbe was rightly of the opinion that the theory of karman was a new addition to the philosophical world-view of the Upanishads though he ascribed its formulation to the Kshatriyas. "The evident circumspection with which Yājñavalkya introduced Ārtabhāga to the idea of karman clearly shows that the idea was new to the priestly world and its favourable reception in that circle a matter of doubt. This is easily intelligible since the law of karman would be decidedly disadvantageous to the sacrificial priest. If moral quality of an action solely and irrevocably determines the future, man becomes the captain of his destiny; the priest and sacrifice, then, cease to be indispensable. More serious, through sacrifice one hoped to win divine favour; but if the 'acts' of a man were omnipotent, where, indeed, would divine favour be ? And if the gods did not possess the power of independent grace, were not sacrifice and prayer useless ?"[1]

Thus, the full realization of the implications of the theory of karman, G.C. Pande argues, was tantamount to a complete revision of the old Vedic eschatology and was destined to usher in a silent revolution. Some priests tried to reconcile *karmavāda* with the new theory of knowledge leading to the emergence of the concept of *jñānakarmasamuchchayavāda* ; some held on to the old belief with only slight modification : karman doutless determines the future but were not sacrificial acts the most righteous acts ? Further, the theory of karman tended to make gods subject to this inflexible law; some were now looked upon even as executive functionaries for the operation of the law of karman. And lastly, it changed the conception of immortality from that of perpetual afterlife i.e. the unending continuation of this-life (which shares the features of all empirical existence) to that of eternal being or the absolute transcendence of empirical existence. To realize immortality of this type one has to know the true nature of his self, to turn back from this world.[2]

However, the Upanishadic thinkers diluted the operation of the law of karman in several ways. Firstly, the later Upanishads which have a pronouncedly theistic orientation, exalt the conception of grace. The *Kaṭha Upanishad* states that the *ātman* is attained not by intellectual or scholastic profundity but by divine grace. It is apparently inconsistent with the doctrine of karman which postulates the possibility of emancipation only through one's own efforts. In the Paurāṇika Hinduism, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Christianity and Islam

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 286-87.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 287-90.

there is the acceptance of the notion of grace but Jainism and early Buddhism emphatically repudiate it. Secondly, sometimes the Upanishads propound the view that the son takes over the actions of the father.[1] Such an assumption apparently goes against the operation of the law of karman. Thirdly, in some of the Upanishads it is said that the last thoughts of a man determine his future station.[2] This view is also contained in the *Gītā*. The later theistic Bhakti literature also advises that in the last moments a man should keep his mind and soul attuned to his *Ishṭadevatā*. All these ideas created distraction from strict adherence to moral determinism.

In the period subsequent to the Upanishads, the doctrine of karman acquired immense significance. Buddha's contemporaries held a variety of views on the subject of the origin of dukkha. The most important of these was the theory of karman held by the Buddha himself, Mahāvīra and the philosophers of some other Śramaṇa sects. In spite of his *anattavāda* the Buddha agreed with the Upanishadic thinkers about the transmission of the effects of one's karmans from one life to another. The Nikāyas often depict the Buddha as preaching this doctrine. At the time of Enlightenment he is said to have had three visions. In the second vision "he saw the whole universe as a system of karman and reincarnation, composed of beings noble or mean, happy or unhappy, continually passing away according to their deeds, leaving one form of existence and taking shape in another."[3] He taught the momentous vitality and significance of the law of karman with such fervour that it has been said that he almost put it in place of the Upanishadic Brahman.

According to early Buddhism, the essence of karman is will,[4] and the most important type of karman is the voluntary mental act—through association with which alone do speech and physical action become karman. Karmans originate in will and are destroyed through will.[5] This makes the Buddhist view of karman basically different from that of the Jainas who regarded karman as a substance rather than as a function.[6] In Buddhism there are two types of karmans

1. *Bṛ. Upa.*, I.5.17; *Kaushītaki*, II. 15.

2. *Chhāndogya*, 3.14.1; *Praśna*, 3.10; *Bṛ. Upa.*, 4.5.5.

3. Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

4. Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 'Man as Willer', *Buddhist Studies*, ed. by B. C. Law, Calcutta, 1931, p. 587.

5. *Origins*, p. 430.

6. In early Buddhist literature is also found a popular version of the kamma theory which gives expression to the principle of moral retribution operative beyond life.

sāsrava and *anāsrava*. The sāsrava karmans are those which bring about good and bad consequences. On the other hand, meditation on the Four Noble Truths, which leads to *Arhathood*, is an anāsrava karman; it does not generate good or evil consequences.

The Buddha divided karmans into three categores : those which produce fruit (i) in this life; (ii) in the next life; and (iii) in a future life. It is by the elimination and neutralisation of karmans that a person attains full emancipation. Self-exertion is the only means of nirvāṇa, and by self-exertion the Buddha meant performance of certain karmans, moral and spiritual. Thus, the greatest emphasis was laid on one's acts and exertion and non-dependence on a superior power or on any ritual and ceremony.[1]

The Middle Way : Buddhist Ethics

For the Way to nirvāṇa the Vinaya uses two terms, paṭipadā (*pratipadā*) and maggo (*mārga*) side by side.[2] Mrs. Rhys Davids feels that the latter term was originally preferred and used by the Buddha.[3] In brief, the Way is the Middle Way (*majjhima paṭipadā* or *majjhima maggo*) consisting in the avoidance of the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. In juxtaposition to the three stages in the process of the origination of sorrow, namely ignorance (*avijjā*), desire (*taṇhā*) and immoral actions (*karman*), Buddhism postulated three stages of the Way leading to the end of sorrow. Its first stage, *sīla*, consists in the practice of virtue and the avoidance of sin. Then comes the practice of *jhāna* or *dhyāna* or contemplation (*samādhi*). And finally comes the attainment of knowledge or intuition of Truth (*paññā* or *prajñā*). Sometimes (as in the *Mahāvagga*) the scheme is made four-stepped by the addition of *vimutti*, or it is made five-fold by the further addition of *vimutti-ñāṇadassana*. However, these two contribute nothing important to the formula as they are not distinguishable from *paññā*.[4]

As pointed out by G. C. Pande, it will be a mistake to suppose that the Buddha preached the Way in the form of a neat and precise formula. According to him, like Jesus Gautama provided his followers with parables and exhortations. The Dhamma which he left behind was an inspiration, not a detailed handbook. He knew that treading

1. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 241; cf. Bhikshu, Rashtrapala, 'The Buddhist Doctrine of Kamma', *World Buddhism*, XII, No. 6, pp. 3-5; cf. also Narada, Thera, 'Kamma, or the Buddhist Theory of Causation', *B.C. Law Volume*, II, pp. 158-75.

2. Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

3. *Gotama the Man*, p. 41.

4. Mishra, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

the spiritual path is not a mechanical and formal exercise. His followers, however, naturally sought to interpret the Dhamma intellectually and 'create the Abhidhamma out of it'. "The Buddha pointed to the moon of Truth; his followers were often content to seize the finger."[1]

The negative aspects of the Middle Way are more or less clear. Vedic rituals, other external sacrifices and the worship of nature-deities were opposed by the Buddha. Similarly, he opposed the extreme austerities advocated by the Jainas and the Ājīvikas. He himself appears to have taught a 'Jhānic' or contemplative way. However, the precise nature of the Way he taught is rather difficult to describe.

According to the traditional view, the three sections of the Way—*sīla*,[2] *samādhi* and *paññā* —were elaborated into eightfold path (*Aṭṭhāṅgiko Maggo*) by the Buddha himself. The *Aṭṭhāṅgiko Maggo* consists of *sammā-vāchā, sammā-kammānta, sammā-ājīva, sammā-vāyāma, sammā-sati, sammā-saṅkappa, sammā-diṭṭhi* and *sammā-samādhi. Sammā-vāchā* is refraining from speaking falsehood, malicious words, and harsh and frivolous talk; *sammā-kammānta* is refraining from killing,[3] stealing, and misconduct; *sammā-ājīva* is refraining from earning livelihood by improper means; *sammā-vāyāma* is effort or exertion to remove the existing evil thoughts; *sammā-sati* is mindfulness (*smṛti*) of all that is happening within the body and mind including feelings; *sammā-saṅkappa* means resolution for renunciation, and also for refraining from hatred and injury to other beings; *sammā-diṭṭhi* means comprehension of the right metaphysical views about the nature of things as propounded by the Buddha (such as the realization of the Four Noble Truths and the Pratītyasamutpāda); and *sammā-samādhi* means four stages of contemplation (*jhāna*) which lead to the attainment of perfect concentration. The first *jhāna* results in the attainment of joy. The second *jhāna* leads to inner peace and silence. By the third *jhāna* one is able to neutralize all his passions, false suppositions and assumptions. The fourth and final *jhāna* results in the attainment of perfect tranquility and spotless calm.[4]

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1. *Origins*, p. 514.

2. Soni, Sujata, 'Place of Śīla in Buddhism', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIII, No. 5, pp. 137-38.

3. Vide Khantipala, Bhikkhu, 'Buddhism, Ahiṁsā and Tolerance', *Aryan Path*, XXXIV, No. 4, pp. 180-83.

4. Cf. Rhys Davids, C. A.F., 'Dhyāna in Early Buddhism', *IHQ*, III, pp. 689-715.

The Aṭṭhāṅgiko Maggo or Ashṭāṅgika Mārga as described above deals with all the aspects of spiritual life namely moral, mental and intellectual. In the *Magga Saṁyutta* it is described as the spiritual guide (*kalyāṇamitta*) and is shown as bestowing all the spiritual benefits that a Buddhist seeker of truth may desire to have. After giving up asceticism, Gautama had fallen back on his childhood experience of Jhāna or Dhyāna, and it was that which led him to Enlightenment. It was, therefore, only natural that Jhāna played a prominent part in his teachings. He is more than once described as 'jhāyin'.[1] In several descriptions of the Way, Jhāna is accorded the chief place. His prominent disciples are praised for their ability in Jhāna. Jhāna was essentially a method of mental discipline which could be utilized for diverse purposes—for attaining this or that divine world, for the sake of supernormal powers, for the sake of enjoyable experience, for communion with the true self or inner reality.[2] In the case of the Buddha it served as a footstep to the realization of higher learning (*vijjā*) culminating in Enlightenment. Normally, the *chitta* is covered with impurities, and is distracted and unsteady. Jhāna serves a cathartic function. It renders the *chitta* pure and receptive which sets the stage for Enlightenment.[3]

It is sometimes believed that the Ashṭāṅgika Mārga represents an original teaching of the Buddha. Many passages from the Nikāyas, the most important of them occurring in the First Sermon (*supra*), are quoted in support of this view. But Mrs. Rhys Davids feels that it was the result of later systematization.[4] In some apparently early passages the Way is spoken of without any reference to its eight-fold character. According to G. C. Pande also, had the Buddha himself taught the Ashṭāṅgika Mārga then,[5] in view of the later fame of the idea, a more positive proof of it would had been preserved. "In fact it would not seem wise", he opines, "to attribute the formula of the eightfold path to Buddha himself in the absence of more convincing evidence. It is probable that he spoke only of the middle way between the two extremes of sense-pleasures (Kāma-sukha) and austerities (Attakilamatho), while it 'crystallized' as eightfold later."[6]

Besides the Aryan Eightfold Path, the early Buddhist texts

1. *Origins*, pp. 529-30.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 531.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 532.
4. Rhys Davids, C.A.F., *Original Gospel*, p. 60.
5. *Origins*, pp. 517-18.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 518.

refer to another moral path—that of the four *Brahmavihāras* of *Maitrī*, *Karuṇā*, *Muditā* and *Upekshā*. *Maitrī* or *mettā* includes both non hatred and loving kindness. Hatred cannot be overcome by hatred; it can be overcome only by non-hatred. *Karuṇā* signifies a feeling of universal compassion, a sympathetic identity with all living beings. The Indian mind has always regarded the Buddha as a personification of universal compassion. *Muditā* or cheerfulness is also a moral virtue. The fourth Brahmavihāra namely *Upekshā* stresses the cultivation of utter non-attachment to the ills, pains, pleasures and tragedies of the world. *Upekshā* is the feature of the man of vision who refuses to be enchanted by the allurements of the eternally changing world.

Concept of Nirvāṇa

Nibbāna or nirvāṇa is regarded as the *summum bonum* for a Buddhist. Its nature as taught by the Buddha has been a subject of controversy from ancient times. If has been variously interpreted in the ancient texts and by modern scholars.[1] When in the light of the later developed philosophic thought the original sayings of the Buddha did not appear to be sufficiently precise, the Buddhist scholars interpreted them in the light of their own philosophical assumptions, just as the later Vedāntin scholars interpreted the *Upanishads*, the *Gītā* and the *Brahma-sūtras* (*Prasthāna-trayī*) in the light of their own philosophical ideas.[2]

Etymologically nirvāṇa may mean three things : Firstly, it may mean cooling which, metaphorically, indicates the cooling of the cravings and passions. Secondly, it may mean stillness produced by the absence of wind—*nirvāṇa avāte*. Thirdly, it may signify the extinction of the psycho-physical complex—*nāmarūpa-skandha* — which is regarded as responsible for pain and sorrow.[3]

There are several possible interpretations of the concept of nirvāṇa and for each one of them some support can be obtained from the early Buddhist texts. (i) At the primary level, nirvāṇa means the extinction of pain and sorrow. However, it does not and cannot mean negation of all feelings because Buddha's heart is said to have been full of deep compassion (*karuṇā*) and love. (ii) At a more philosophical level, nirvāṇa means the extinction of the empirical phenomena. (iii) A third implication of nirvāṇa mentioned in some parts of the early Buddhist literature and later developed by the

1. For a critical analysis of various views of modern scholars vide Pande, G.C., *op.cit.*, pp.451-56.

2. *Ibid.*, pp.443-44.

3. Dasgupta, *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 108.

Sautrāntikas is absolute extinction or total nihil. (iv) A fourth significance of nirvāṇa is the implication of the being of an absolute real. This interpretation was later developed in the *tathatā* philosophy of Aśvaghosha. There nirvāṇa is identified with the real being of an Absolute. A few passages of the Tripiṭaka texts may possibly be utilised for to this interpretation.

The Buddha himself deliberately avoided any positive answer to the question : what is nibbāna ? He regarded it as beyond any discussion (*atarkāvachara*) *avyaktta* or *akathanīya*. Various explanations are given as to why the Buddha did not give any clear answer to this question. There is no proof in support of Stcherbatsky's view that it was a custom in Buddha's time to remain silent when one wanted to answer a question negatively.[1] Similarly, the suggestion of Keith and Poussin that the Buddha did not know the answer himself[2] is, to say the least, uncharitable. The best explanation[3] seems to be that the Buddha realized that a metaphysical discussion on nirvāṇa would be not only irrelevant but also a hindrance in its practical realization. He knew that nirvāṇa is inconceivable, inexpressible, and so deep and subtle that it could not be communicated by one person to another; it could be realized by one within one's own self.[4] He advised the Pañchavaggīya monks to realize the Truth themselves (*sañaṁ abhiññā*) through proper training.[5]

But in spite of the inconceivability of nirvāṇa there are passages in the early texts which attempt to describe its negative and positive attributes. In the *Majjhima Nikāya* nibbāna is described as unborn, unoriginated, unconstituted, undecaying, undying, free from diseases, grief and impurities, the highest perfection achievable through the best exertion. "The question of origin or non-origin does not arise in the case of Nibbāna, because it is firm, eternal and changeless."[6] In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* also nibbāna is described as unconstituted, undying, true, undecaying, firm, signless, inexpressible, calm, quiet, excellent and a place without fall and as

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1. *Origins*, p. 506.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 505.
3. Cf. Schrader, F. C., 'On the Problem of Nirvāṇa', *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1904-05.
4. Cf. Swami Tapasyananda, 'Buddha's Answers to the Great Questions of Life' (*Vedānta Kesarī*, LII, No.1, pp. 18-24) who argues that Buddha's wisdom had only one term of reference and that is nirvāṇa.
5. Mishra, *op.cit.*, p. 75, n. 199.
6. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

the dhamma, the form, location, age and measure of which cannot be described.[1]

According to the *Mahāvagga*, the truth or dhamma realized by the Buddha at the time of Enlightenment consisted of the paṭichcha-samuppāda and nibbāna, respectively the non-ultimate and ultimate experiences. The same text answers this question by saying that after the attainment of nibbāna all *saṁkhāras* cease to operate, all *upādhis* are left far behind, all desires are destroyed, including the desire of nirvāṇa.[2] It is thus cessation of suffering as feeling as well as of its cause. It is not a state of total nihil or annihilation or nothingness; according to the *Mahāvagga* it is a state of positive bliss (*vimutti sukha* or *parama sukkha*)[3] It instantly reminds one of the Upanishadic *ānanda*, a characteristic of Brahman. In the *Theragāthā* and the *Therigāthā* it is stated that the theras and theris relished the bliss of nirvāṇa. In the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* it is said that the spirit of the Buddha passes "from one state of ecstasy to another up and down through the stages of rapture until he passed into nirvāṇa."[4] At another place the *Dīgha Nikāya* states that the nirvāṇa is the beginning point of all mundane phenomena and the worldly elements are dissolved in that. In the *Sutta Nipāta* it is said—*amṛtaṁ śāntaṁ nirvāṇaṁ padamachyutam*. Another verse of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* refers to it as "*sudurdarśaṁ, ajaraṁ, dhruvaṁ, nishprapañchaṁ, amṛtaṁ, śivaṁ*." Here, the word nirvāṇa seems to be substituted for the word Brahman. It is tantamount to śāśvatavāda or eternalism, which the Buddha is supposed to have been so anxious to avoid.[5]

The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* texts also contain some aspects of the metaphysics of nirvāṇa. According to the *Kathāvatthu* and the *Abhidharmakosha*, nirvāṇa is *lokottara*, eternal and blissful. In the *Dhammasaṅgiṇī* also nirvāṇa is not utter extinction or absolute nihil; it is at least partly positive. In it there is a stress on the indescribability of the state of nirvāṇa; its negative descriptions have been applied in virtue of its transcendence.[6] In several other Pali texts nibbāṇa is equated with infinite consciousness (*viññāna*). According to a simile

1. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
2. Conze, E., *Buddhist Thought in India*, p. 67.
3. Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 74; Poussin, *IHQ*, IV, p. 347; *ERE*, IX, p. 376.
4. Oldenberg, *Buddha*, p. 202; cf. Obermiller, E., 'The Account of Buddha's Nirvāṇa', *IHQ*, VIII, pp. 781-84.
5. Varma, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-55.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 258-59.

commonly used, nibbāna is like a vast ocean which does not show any increase or decrease, however much water (in the form of countless arhats) may flow into it. According to Nāgasena, nibbāna is like the invisible air the existence of which is only felt by the body of a common man. The fact that it is perceived by the arhats in the present life proves its reality. Just as a blind man sees the sun the moment his blindness is cured, nibbāna is visualized by the arhat as soon as he develops eyes of knowledge. Nirvāṇa is not a state or an object to be attained. It is not produced by the eightfold path or *sādhanā*. It is ever-existent and comes to an exerting person as a flash of light. In the *Milindapañho*, nibbāna is considered to be something positive, non-temporally eternal and supremely beatific. It can be experienced, though not described.[1] Buddhaghosha strongly opposes the view that nibbāna is a mere absence or annihilation of the passions etc. According to Anuruddhāchāriya, nibbāna is eternal, transcendental, supreme, 'realizable' and unique. Thus, the Theravādins consistently held nibbāna to be positive, experienceable, indescribable and supreme—the most worthwhile.[2] The Vaibhāshikas regarded nirvāṇa as real and eternal. Only the Sautrāntikas generally believed in the purely negative character of Nirvāṇa, though they also generally admit the survival of a subtle spiritual consciousness. The Brāhmaṇical tradition and many European scholars have described them as utter nihilists, but most of the Japanese scholars oppose such a view. Stcherbatsky has also opined that Śūnyatā meant only the relativity of individual things and ideas. According to Nāgārjuna, the Buddha kept silence on the question of nirvāṇa because "the asked for determinations were inapplicable. Thus Nirvāṇa cannot be non-existence, else it will cease to be uncaused and unconditioned. It cannot be existence for the same reason. It cannot be both because both are conditioned (*Saṅskṛta*) while Nirvāṇa is unconditioned (*Asaṅskṛta*). To call Nirvāṇa neither existence nor non-existence will be tantamount to speaking the unspeakable. It is just the eternal quiescence of all phenomena (Prapañcopaśmaḥ) and utterly well (Śivaḥ)."[3]

The attainment of nirvāṇa makes one different from ordinary mortals. He becomes omniscient, all-enlightened, and released; he remains unpolluted by everything and enjoys perfect calm. He is not attached to anything in the world as a lotus flower is not affected by

1. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 445.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 450-51.

the water upon which it floats. He leaves evil, and virtues become useless for him like a raft which is forsaken by one who has crossed the river. He acquires true insight into the *dhamma*, attains *ñāṇa*, *paññā*, *vijjā*, and *āloka*. The *paññā* of a Buddha is intuitive and synoptic and he realizes it himself (*sañaṁ abhiññā*) because the ultimate truth is beyond logic (*atakko*).[1]

It is unlikely that originally any distinction between the Buddha and the Arhat was conceived. The attainment of the state of the Arhat was the same as the culminating realisation of the state of nirvāṇa. However, later on a distinction came to be effected between the two. There are indications in the Buddhist literature that the state of the Tathāgata was regarded as superior to the state of the Arhat. The Hīnayānist Arhats themselves admitted that they had not become Buddhas, probably to indicate the super-eminent position of the founder of their religion.

The attainment of the state of the Arhat or of nirvāṇa does not mean absolute withdrawal from the active world. The early Buddhist literature categorically states that the Buddha had attained nirvāṇa in his life time. Hence, it follows that even after the attainment of the state of nirvāṇa a life of dynamic energy and action is possible. That is why a distinction was conceived between nirvāṇa and parinirvāṇa. Nirvāṇa means the withering away of pain and sorrow. Parinirvāṇa means the state of Buddhahood after the disintegration of the physical body elements of the Arhat.

On the metaphysical relation of nibbāna and saṁsāra there is little evidence in the early texts. However, it is repeatedly said that nirvāṇa implies the stoppage of the wheel of rebirth. The *Sutta Nipāta* refers to nirvāṇa as the end of the wheel of birth and death. Nibbāna is the ultimately sought for end, the most worthwhile. It is the goal of the spiritual pilgrimage, that where one finally goes beyond all sorrows. It is the safe 'other bank'. In nibbāna not only does saṁsāra cease, there takes an emancipation from it. This freedom rests in nibbāna i.e. to be freed from saṁsāra is to rest in nibbāna.[2]

Thus, we observe that with the possible exception of the Sautrāntikas hardly ever did the Buddhists regard nirvāṇa as total nihil. Further, there is a complete unanimity among the various schools of Buddhism about the unconditioned nature of nirvāṇa. It is beyond the pale of causes and conditions. They also agree that it is

1. A gāthā uttered by the Buddha to the Ājīvika Upaka contains a number of descriptive epithets of one who has attained nibbāna (Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 74).

2. *Origins*, pp. 481-82.

inexpressible; it can only be intuitively comprehended. Finally, it is unanimously accepted that nirvāṇa is the ultimate good, the end of all restlessness and striving.

The weight of modern scholarly opinion is also against regarding the Buddha as agnostic or nihilist. Poussin argues that nirvāṇa could be regarded either as immortality or as annihilation or as cessation of pain. The first he considered as impossible, the second as logically following from the doctrine of no-soulism and third as the actual attitude of the Buddha. Some others have also attributed utter nihilism to the Buddha. However, Oldenberg believed that there are some texts which suggest that the silence of the Buddha was due to the indescribable character of nirvāṇa. Mrs. Rhys Davids, Schrader and Radhakrishnan appeal to forcible *a priori* considerations against regarding the Buddha an agnostic or nihilist. Barua also repudiated the negative concept of nirvāṇa.[1] According to G.C. Pande, the evidence of the Buddhist texts "cumulatively suggests an Absolutist position and supports the Mādhyamika interpretation. And this is hardly surprising since already before the Buddha Absolutism is in unmistakable terms expressed in the Upaniṣada."[2] Many other scholars have expressed their agreement with a non-annihilationist interpretation of nirvāṇa. According Mahā Thera Nārada, "To say that Nibbāna is nothingness simply because one cannot perceive it with five senses is illogical."[3] According to Conze, nirvāṇa is obviously transcendental and uncognizable by logical thought. According to G. Richard Wilbon, one cannot insist that nirvāṇa for the Buddhists was ever only bliss or annihilation.[4] Sadhatissa opines that nirvāṇa was regarded as the highest happiness.[5] Moni Bagchi[6] thinks that what the Buddha meant by nirvāṇa is limitless, permanent, eternal, positive and immutable consciousness.

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1. For a detailed discussion on and assessment of these views see Pande, *op.cit.*, pp. 451-56.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 509.

3. Nārada, Mahāthera, 'Nibbāna', *Mahābodhi*, Vol. LXXI, No. 5, pp. 74-83; cf. also Pandita Sudharma, 'How Positive is Nirvāṇa ?', *Ceylon Today*, XII, No. 4, pp. 30 ff.

4. Wilbon, G. R., 'On Understanding the Buddhist Nirvāṇa', *History of Religion*, V, No. 2, pp. 300-26.

5. Saddhatissa, 'Nibbāna', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, Nos. 3-4, pp. 34-39; cf. Bhikshu Rashtrapala, 'Nibbāna' *Mahābodhi*, LXXII, No. 5, pp. 138-40.

6. Bagchi, Moni, 'The Conception of Nirvāṇa', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, Nos. 7-8, pp. 161-64.

N. Dutt has divided Buddha's discourses on nibbāna into three categories. In the discourses of the first category nirvāṇa is described as a negative ethical concept. In them "it is the end of desire or thirst for worldly objects or existences; it is the eradication of attachment (*rāga*), ill-will (*ḍveśa*) and delusion (*moha*); it is the removal of all impurities (*kleśas* and *āsravas*) by meditational and other practices; it is the removal of ignorance (*avidyā*); it is an end of repeated existences; it is the cessation of all thought-constructions (*vikalpa*); it is the absence of worldly attributes (*upādhi*); it is not associated with happiness or unhappiness or indifference; it is non-mental; it has no basis, no cause."[1] In the discourse of the second category nirvāṇa is described a a positive ethical concept. Here "it is perfection in *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*, i.e. the eightfold path; it is realised by exertion (*tapas*), purity (*brahmacarya*) and comprehension of the four truths; it is perfection in four *smṛtyupasthāna* (mindfulness) practices; it is *arhathood*, ... it is peace and quietude; it is the place from which there is no fall; it is deathless, the place of bliss and perfect passionlessness."[2] In the discourses of the third category nirvāṇa is regarded as a metaphysical concept. Here it is "eternal and fixed and beyond the scope of dicursive and discriminatory thoughts. It is homogenous. It has neither origin nor decay. It is without past, present or future. It is unlimited and unsurpassable, unfathomable and immeasurable. It is unconditional and unconstituted (*asaṁskṛta*). ... It is supramundane (*lokottara*) and beyond the three spheres of existence, Kāma, Rūpa and Arūpa (*apariyāpanna*). It is beyond the fourfold propositions, i.e. it cannot be said to exist, not exist or both exist and not exist, or neither exist nor not exit."[3] How close it is to the Upanishadic concept of Brahma !

1. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 293.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 293-94.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

Chapter 9

Śramaṇa Gautama and Early Buddhist Śramaṇism (ii)

Early Buddhist Śramaṇism and Caste System

Like other Śramaṇa religions and Śramaṇa sects of India early Buddhism also did not believe in caste system, denied the superiority of Brāhmaṇas, prescribed the path of monasticism for its followers and admited into its *saṅgha* everybody irrespective of his caste, gender and āśrama (stage of life), though in recent years some scholars have given more emphasis on Buddha's opposition to caste system than it seems to have been the case. According to B.R. Ambedkar, "No caste, no inequality, no superiority : all are equal. That is what he (that is the Buddha) stood for."[1] Rhys Davids has stressed that Buddhism "ignores completely and absolutely all advantages and disadvantages arising from birth, occupation or social status and sweeps away all barriers and disabilities arising from the arbitrary rules of mere ceremonial or social impurity."[2] According to some recent historians, Buddhism produced the only consciously egalitarian social philosophy in ancient India[3] and Buddha's professed commitment to human equality was nothing short of a revolution.[4] We, however, feel that this assumption is only marginally correct. The belief that the Buddha believed in absolute social equality of men is as much untrue as the theory that he believed in the social equality of both the sexes (*infra*). It is generally held that the Buddha was prepared to accept differences between man and man, but based not on heredity; for this he relied on the criterion of wisdom, deeds and virtue. In other words, he opposed the caste hierarchy based on

1. Ambedkar, B.R., *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Bombay, 1974, p. 301.

2. *Dialogues*, III, p. 78.

3. Pratap Chandra, 'Buddhism as an Instrument of Social Change', *Studies in Religion and Change*, ed. by Madhu Sen, New Delhi, 1983,p. 93.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 94; cf. also Narasu, P. Lakshmi, *The Essence of Buddhism*, Delhi, 1976, Ch. IV.

the birth advocated by the Vedic religion. However, in this connection we would like to draw the attention of scholars to the following facts:

The Buddha did not reject the notion of caste system. He merely gave a new twist to it. In the *Aggañña sutta* he rejects the divine origin theory of the varṇa system (which later on developed into caste system) and instead ties it up with the evolutionary process. In this *sutta* he opines that arose because of the laziness and greed of men. The first to emerge were the Khattiyas, so called because their job was looking after the field (*kheta*). The first Khattiya was elected to the position of king or Mahāsammata because he was "the handsomest, the best favoured, the most attractive, the most capable." Next arose the Brāhmaṇas (those who put away evil) who became abstainers from worldly pursuits. They were the *jhāyakas* or the meditating ones and *ajjhāyakas* or those who teach. Then there were the Vessas who indulged in various trades and the Suddas who subsisted on hunting.[1] From this it is apparent that : (a) The Buddha did not question the wisdom behind organising the society into the four varṇas. (b) In his own scheme he made Kshatriyas superior to the Brāhmaṇas. (c) He had nothing to add so far as the last two varṇas were concerned. Thus, his whole exercise boils down to one point only : the Kshatriyas are superior to Brāhmaṇas.

Buddha's partiality for the Kshatriya caste is apparent from several other facts. Firstly, in his suttas and other Buddhist texts in the enumeration of the castes the Khattiyas are always mentioned first.[2] In the *Dīgha Nikāya* (III. 1.15) even a Brāhmaṇa mentions Khattiyas before Brāhmaṇas though it does not fit well with his following words. "Of these (four castes) three, Khattiya, Vessa and Suddha, exist only to serve the Brāhmaṇas." In this belief the Buddha had the good company of the Jainas who also claimed a higher status for the Kshatriyas. The Śvetāmbara Jainas held the belief that the embryo of Mahāvīra was transferred from the womb of the Brāhmaṇī Devānandā to that of the Kshattriyāṇī Triśalā, since it was held that "a Brāhmaṇa or another woman of low family was not worthy to give birth to a Tīrthaṅkara." A similar attitude is found in early Buddhism for in the *Nidānakathā* and the *Lalitavistara* it is said that when the future Buddha reflected in which caste he will be re-born, he decided in favour of the Khattiya caste because at that time it was the highest.[3]

1. Ghoshal, U. N., *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, Oxford, 1959, p. 63.

2. Fick, R., *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time*, Calcutta, 1920, p. 84.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

It is an open advocacy of the superiority of the Kshatriya caste. In the *Ambaṭṭha sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* we are told that the Brāhmaṇa Ambhṭṭha went to the Buddha and accused the Śākyas of being rude to the Brāhmaṇas. In answer the Buddha praised the Śākyas and tried to humble the pride of Ambaṭṭha by describing the Kāṇhāyana gotra to which he belonged as having been founded by a slave of the king Ikshvāku. He went on to declare that the status of the Kshattriyas was higher than that of the Brāhmaṇas because the Brāhmaṇas accept the offspring of an inter-marriage between the Brāhmaṇas and the Kshattriyas while the Kshattriyas do not.[1] The Buddha then quotes a *gāthā* supposed to have been enunciated by Brahmā Sanatkumāra according to which "among those who follow the lineage or gotra, the Kshatriya has superiority. However, the person who has learning and character is superior to men as well as gods." It is interesting that in order to prove the low origin of Ambaṭṭha, the Buddha cited (though incorrectly) the proof from the early Vedic age. Apparently, he believed that no one with a lowly birth could improve his social status by *jātyutkarsha*; the Brāhmaṇa society believed in such a possibility.

The hostility of the Buddha to the Brāhmaṇas becomes apparent from the following facts also : In his various suttas we find repeated assertion that the Brāhmaṇas lost their honour in society (in which they enjoyed only the second place) because they had become corrupt. But nowhere does he refer to the decline of the Kshatriyas. Thus, he tacitly assumes that the Kshatriyas were still as pure and worthy of their status as they were in the earlier ages. In the Jātaka stories also Kshatriyas of degraded character are rarely, if at all, mentioned; in them it is only the Brāhmaṇas who are usually described as of mean character. They not only eat beef (e.g. in the *Matakabhatta Jātaka*) but indulge in the most despicable deeds—even the Brāhmaṇa housewives are shown as grossly corrupt behaving like prostitutes (e.g. in the *Rādha Jātaka*, the *Kosiya Jātaka*, etc.). In the words of Fick, "in many cases the Brāhmaṇas are pictured as greedy, shameles and immoral and serve as a foil to the Khattiyas who play the part of virtuous and noble humanity."[2]

Acceptance in marriage and commensality have been the touch-stones of caste system and the Buddha was a firm believer in them—at least so far as his own Kshatriya caste was concerned.

1. Pande, G.C., *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 53. This statement of the Buddha is incorrect. It finds no parallel in the Brāhmaṇical literature.

2. Fick, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

Thus, according to him the Brāhmaṇas were inferior to the Kshatriyas not only because a woman of impure ancestry could be accepted by the former and not by the latter, but also because the latter would not eat with her or her progeny while the former would. The Buddha was thus loud in denouncing the superior birth theory if it helped the Brāhmaṇas, but changed his stand if it helped his own caste.

In the *Vāseṭṭhasutta* when Brāhmaṇa Vāseṭṭha, apparently basing his view on the Purushasūkta of the *RV*, claims that the Brāhmaṇas are superior to others because they were born out of the mouth of Brahmā (not neuter *Brahma*), the Buddha ridicules him by saying that like other human beings Brāhmaṇas are also given birth by women. Here, the Buddha gives a populist argument and takes the Purushasūkta imagery literally which can hardly be regarded as the intention of the Vedic *ṛshis*. Similarly his argument that the four-fold caste system was not universal, states the obvious and does not prove anything.

What the Buddha gave with one hand took away with the other, for, though he theoretically rejected the principle of determining one's social status on the basis of birth in a caste (which, as we have seen, was not an unqualified rejection and was applied in the case of Brāhmaṇas only) he accepted the concept of social superiority or inferiority on the basis of *kula* or family, which in his thinking was determined by one's birth. As we have seen, in the *Ambaṭṭha sutta* he tries to convince the Brāhmaṇa Ambaṭṭha that he was inferior to the Śākyas because he was born in an inferior *kula*. He argues that even the most degraded of the Kshatriyas is superior to a Brāhmaṇa because the former is born in a higher *kula*. In the Jātakas this point has been illustrated by a number of stories. In the *Sigāla Jātaka* the son of a barber dies for the love of a Lichchhavi girl. The Buddha denounces him for his amibition because being born in a low *kula* a barber should not covet the hand of a Kshatriya girl. In the *Siṁhakotthuka Jātaka*, Kokākila, a monk born in an inferior *kula*, wants to recite the religious texts as the monks born in higher *kulas* were doing. The matter is brought to the notice of the Buddha who calls the aspirant monk and rebukes him thoroughly and tells him that while the monks born in superior *kulas* were like lions, he was like the offspring of a jackal. In the *Siṁhachamma Jātaka* the same Kokākila is likened with an ass who wants to acquire the status of lion by wearing the lion-skin. Many other Jātaka stories emphasize the importance of being born in a superior *kula*. This emphasis on *kula* nullified whatever influence Buddha's partial and lopsided

denunciation of the caste system might have exerted.[1]

The Buddha is supposed to have attacked the Brāhmaṇical caste system from several angles. Firstly, it is maintained that instead of birth he defined castes with reference to one's qualities, inclination and vocation.[2] In the *Soṇadaṇḍasutta* the Brāhmaṇa Soṇadaṇḍa declares that there are five pre-requisites for being regarded as a Brāhmaṇa—Varṇa (pure descent on both sides), Jāti (fine personality), Mantra (knowledge of the Veda), Śīla (virtue), and Pāṇḍitya (learning). But when the Buddha presses him to declare what was indispensable out of these five, the Brāhmaṇa agrees that only the last two are necessary to make a person Brāhmaṇa.[3] (Here it may be noted that in the praise of virtue and learning, ritual conduct and Vedic learning were expressly excluded). In the *Assalāyanasutta* when the Brāhmaṇa Assalāyana claims that Brāhmaṇa is the superior varṇa, the Buddha tells him that people of all the varṇas are of the same human species, capable of interbreeding. In the *Vāseṭṭhasutta*, when two Brāhmaṇa come to him with the problem 'does one become a Brāhmaṇa by birth or by deed', he explains the difference between species (which differ in physical features) and human classes (which rest on the vocations of men). A man may become a trader, a solidier or may adopt any other profession. But a Brāhmaṇa is one who has high moral qualities and is detached and wise; one does not become a Brāhmaṇa by birth.[4] At a later date Aśvaghosha also argued that Brāhmaṇahood consists neither in birth or jāti (because we know that several famous sages were born through miscegenation and in that case no Brāhmaṇa can lose his caste as the Smṛtis maintain), nor in body (because then burning the dead body would cause *brahmahatyā*), nor in learning (because then low caste people with good conduct would be Brāhmaṇas). Aśvaghosha then concludes that the Brāhmaṇahood consists in the purity of heart and that all men belong to one varṇa which gets divided into four on the basis of vocations or functions. Many other suttas of the Buddha and other early Buddhist texts may be quoted where Brāhmaṇahood is defined in terms of qualities and not birth. But this definition (or rather definitions) of a true Brāhmaṇa had no relationship with actual social stratification. It was like defining a Vaishṇava as the one who

1. Cf. Niyogi, *Jātakakālīna Bhāratīya Saṁskṛti.*

2. Cf. Saha, K., 'The Brāhmaṇa in Pāli Literature', *Social Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1971, pp. 49-51.

3. Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1970, p. 178.

4. Pande, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

understands the grief of others (*Vaishṇava jana to tene kahiye jo pīḍa parāyī jāne re*). It is a good sentiment; nobody can have any quarrel with it. But it is the definition of a good man, not of a Vaishṇava. Logically, such a definition is no definition at all, for the question still remains who, among those who understand the grief of others, may be regarded as a member of the Vaishṇava sect. Similarly, the qualities of a Brāhmaṇa as enumerated by the Buddha are the qualities of every good man. The Buddha himself must have looked for these qualities in the members of other social groups also. Therefore his definition of a Brāhmaṇa is no definition at all; it does not make Brāhmaṇas a social group—as the Kshatriyas were in the eyes of the Buddha himself. As the Buddha does not give any emphasis on the qualities necessary for the Kshatriyas and other social groups, his repeated attempts to denounce his Brāhmaṇa contemporaries by comparing their 'real' character with the 'ideal' character of a true Brāhmaṇa of his own definition only proves his prejudice against Brāhmaṇas and partiality for the Kshatriyas.

Buddha's protest against caste system, whatever its limitations, was not 'revolutionary'. It was not something new or radical; it was shared by all contemporary religious sects. The Jaina attitude to this problem is evidenced by the *Uttarājjhayaṇa* where a Brāhmaṇa-turned-monk instructs the Brāhmaṇas about what is a true sacrifice and who is a true Brāhmaṇa. "The binding of animals (to the sacrificial pole), all the Vedas and sacrifices, being cause of sin, cannot save the sinner, for his karman is very powerful. ... One becomes a Śramaṇa by equanimity, a Brāhmaṇa by chastity, a Muni by knowledge and a Tāpasa by penance. By one's actions one becomes a Brāhmaṇa, or a Kshatriya, or a Vaiśya or a Śūdra. ... him who is exempt from all karman we call a Brāhmaṇa."[1]

A similar emphasis on deeds rather than birth was given in the enlightened and liberal sections of the Brāhmaṇical socety. The *Chhāndogya Upa.* (IV.4) says that good conduct makes a man the best Brāhmaṇa.[2] In the *Gītā* (IV. 13) Kṛshṇa declares that he created the four varṇas according to divisions of aptitude and action. (*chāturvarṇyaṁ mayā sṛshṭaṁ guṇa-karma vibhāgaśaḥ*). Referring to this verse Telang observes, "there is nothing in the *Gītā* to indicate whether caste was hereditary."[3] According to Radhakrishnan also,

1. Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, II, Oxford, 1895, pp. 130 ff.

2. Cf. Haldar, J. N., 'Caste in Early Buddhist Literature', *Social Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, pp. 45-48.

3. SBE, VIII, p. 21.

"The emphasis (of the *Gītā*) is on *guṇa* (aptitude) and *karma* (function) and not *jāti* (birth). The varṇa or the order to which we belong is independent of sex, birth or breeding. A class determined by temperament and vocation is not a caste determined by birth and heredity."[1] Similarly, Datta observes : "There are natural divisions among men in accordance with their intrinsic qualities and actions; their capacities and duties vary accordingly."[2]

That the *Gītā* did not believe in the rigidity of the traditional caste system is further proved when Kṛshṇa declares : "Those who take refuge in me, O Arjuna, though they are lowly born, women, Vaiśyas as well as Śūdras, they also attain to the highest goal" (IX. 32). From this it is evident that the *Gītā* did not believe in the rigour of caste with regard to the practice of religion. Buddhism was obviously not the only religion to give religious rights, including the right of emancipation, to the Śūdras.

The theory as propounded in the *Gītā* is made clearer in the Ājagaraparvan of the *Mahābhārata*. Here, Yudhishṭhira is asked by the python, "Who O king, is a Brāhmaṇa ?" and the king answers, "A Brāhmaṇa is one who evinces truth, liberality, forbearance, virtue, mildness, austerity and piety." At this the python points out that such qualities may be found in the Śūdras as well. Yudhishṭhira, however, sticks to his definition and insists that anyone possessing these qualities should be called a Brāhmaṇa. On being further questioned he explains that birth is not the criterion of caste and men are all alike in their social and sexual behaviour. "O great serpent, if sacramentally purified conduct is to be found in some one, I would call him Brāhmaṇa."[3]

That the enlightened sections of the Brāhmaṇical society did not believe in the superiority or inferiority of any profession is made further clear by several other passages of the *Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata*. The *Gītā* declares : "man attains perfection devoted each to his own duty" (XVIII. 45) and that "all actions are associated with (more or less) defects as fire with smoke" (XVIII. 48). In the Vanaparvan of the *Mahābhārata* in the dialogue between a meat-seller and a Brāhmaṇa the former is considered better than the penance-perfoming Brāhmaṇa because he, the meat-seller, discharged his duties devotedly for the good of others. Similarly, in the dialogue between the pedlar and Jājali (Śāntiparvan of the

1. *The Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 160-61.
2. *The Chief Currents of Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 566.
3. Pande, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

Mahābhārata) the profession of pedlary is held superior if followed honestly. By these instances we are not trying to prove that the Brāhmaṇa society did not believe in the rigours of caste system, for its main current certainly believed in the caste system of the most rigid type. What we want to emphasize is only the fact that many Brāhmaṇical texts and thinkers were as much liberal as the Buddhists, probably more, in their social outlook.

It is certainly true that Buddhism recognised the right of the Śūdras to enter the saṅgha and gave them opportunity to do so. But there was nothing revolutionary about it. The other contemporary ascetic sects gave the Śūdras the same opportunity and right. Even the *Gītā* accepts it as the right of everybody to achieve emancipation. Further, it may be noted that the opening of the doors of the Buddhist *saṅgha* for the Śūdras and others[1] did not have much significance for society. It appears that "the Buddhist protest was satisfied when the Buddhist monks obtained a venerable position in society without reference to their caste origin."[2] But any one from the low castes who became a monk acquired social reverence not as a member of a low caste but as a monk. Therefore, so far as caste system was concerned, it was not at all shaken by the acceptance of the Śūdras in the Buddhist saṅgha.

It must also be remembered that the Buddhist saṅgha itself was greatly influenced by caste system, for its monks usually failed to forget their caste antecedents. Monks like Upāli who belonged to low castes and yet got respectful position were few. It is well-known that Devadatta refused to pay homage to Upāli. Yāśa, a minister of Aśoka, though himself a Buddhist, wanted the emperor to discriminate among the monks according to their original caste. The attitude of the Buddhist laity was also not anti-caste. Therefore the impact of Buddha's teaching on caste system was minimal except on those who became monks—but, as noted above, once a person became an ascetic, his caste antecedent became immaterial. It meant that the entry of some people from low castes into the Buddhist or any other saṅgha left the caste system unaffected.

Whether or not early Buddhism believed in complete social equality of all may also be seen in its attitude towards slavery. In the age of the Buddha slavery was an established institution. The Buddhist literature itself is full of references to the pitiable condition of slaves

1. However, as pointed out by Oldenberg, no Chāṇḍāla is known to have been accepted in the Buddhist Church.

2. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

and slave-girls.[1] The Buddha was himself served by slaves; for the existence of slavery in the Śākyan society is proved by the famous example of Vāsabhakhattiyā, the slave-girl, who was presented and married to Prasenajit as a Śākya princess. Further, the Buddha must have seen innumerable slaves with his affluent and royal lay-devotees such as Anāthapiṇḍika, Bimbisāra, Prasenajit, etc. The question is : what did he do for the eradication of this evil institution ? The answer is 'precious nothing'. He was certainly moved by their pitiable condition and once he suggested a code of conduct for the slaves and their masters. But the proposed code only suggested that (a) the slaves should remain satisfied with what they had got; (b) they should praise and work for the fame of their master; and (c) the masters should behave with the slaves kindly. In brief, his code merely exhorted the masters to be merciful to their slaves.[2] Aśoka shows the same attitude in his edicts. Thus, it is apparent that the early Buddhism did not realize the suffering of slaves and did not try to appreciate the spirit of resentment among them. The entire Tripiṭaka is free from any suggestion for their betterment. Rather, the Buddha is known to have consoled them with the argument that their condition was the result of their past deeds and assured them the status of god if they suffered their lot willingly.[3]

The Buddha apparently did not see any 'suffering' in slavery—and for that matter in any evil social institution. It is significant that none of the spectacles which led him to adopt the life of homelessness (viz., sickness, old age and death) was 'social' in nature; all these three represent 'individual' suffering. Actually, his concept of suffering was not even individual; he was motivated by 'spiritual' suffering and sickness, his concpt of *bahujana hitāya bahujana sukhāya* was not social in nature; the *hita* of others which he sought to achieve was spiritual or ethical, not social. Buddhism emerged in a particular social environment in which the very existence of man was regarded as sorrowful. Dukkhavāda in those days was as widey accepted a doctrine as socialism is today. The Buddha was a great thinker, but he was also a child of his age; he was, therefore, more concerned with the ethical betterment of his followers and not in the social problems of the day (such as position of women, slavery and condition of the low castes). His influence on the contemporary

1. Cf. Sinha, B.P., 'Early Indian Buddhism as a Factor of Social Change', in *Studies in Religion and Change*, pp. 83-84.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

social order, if any, was only accidental, not intentional.[1]

Early Buddhist Attitude to Gender Equality

Now let us take up the question of the attitude of the Buddha towards women. Many historians have sought to make him a redeemer of the lot of Indian women. According to I. B. Horner, "In the pre-Buddhist days the status of women in India was on the whole low and without honour. During the Buddhist epoch there was a change. Women came to enjoy more equality and greater respect and authority than ever hitherto accorded to them." Horner gives the credit for this supposed change to the Buddha for he "gave the Dhamma to both (men and women)." "It was impossible," she argues, "for the men, steeped as they were in the Buddhist teachings, not to respond to the constant proofs in daily life of women's powers of self-sacrifice, courage and devotion." "Under Buddhism, more than ever before, she was an individual in command of her own life until the dissolution of the body, and less of a chattel, to be only respected if she lived through and on a man. The old complete dependence, in which the will never functioned but to obey, was gradually vanishing."[2] According to another Buddhist historian, "Buddhism along with Jainism but unlike Brahmanism gave equal opportunity in religious culture to women."[3] According to Ambedkar also, the Buddha was an upholder of the doctrine of the equality of sexes.[4] In the opinion of P. Lakshmi Narasu, "man and woman are placed by the Buddha on the same footing."[5] But the entire approach of Horner and the like is vitiated by their *a priori* assumption that the condition of the Indian women in the pre-Buddhist period was on the whole low and without honour and that it improved to a considerable degree because of the impact of Buddhism. But the first part of this assumption is not only unproved, it is decidedly against the well-known facts of history. As A. S. Altekar[6] has shown, before c. 500 B.C. the position of Indian women was comparatively better as compared to what it became in subsequent centuries. He has shown that down to c. 500 B.C. the custom of *satī* and child marriage did not exist to embitter the lot of women; she was properly educated and given the same religious privileges as man; she could have a voice in the settlement of her marriage and occupy an honoured

1. *Ibid.*
2. Horner, *Women Under Primitive Buddhism*, London, 1936, pp. 3-4.
3. Joshi, *Studies in the Buddhist Culture of India*, Delhi, 1967, p. 368.
4. Ambedkar, *op.cit.*
5. Narasu, *The Essence of Buddhism*, p. 122.
6. Altekar, *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, pp. 343 ff.

position in the household, could move freely in family and society and take an intelligent part in public affairs and take to a career if urged by inclination or necessity. The position of women deteriorated in the post-500 B.C. period because of the growth of slavery which rendered them unproductive members of society, the entry of non-Aryan females in the Aryan households and decline of the cult of sacrifice which made their *upanayana* unobligatory leading to a decline in their education. Thus, chronologically speaking the position of women in India with the advent of Buddhism became worse, not better, as compared to their position in the pre-Buddhist period (though no causal relationship between the two phenomena is suggested here).

But was the attitude of the Buddha at all more sympathetic to women than the attitude of other contemporary leaders and thinkers ? Most likely not. As is well-known, the Buddha was not at all in favour of admitting women as nuns in his saṅgha, and agreed to do so most reluctantly only after the repeated requests of his foster-mother and aunt Mahāprajāpati were supported by Ānanda and that too after laying down eight special rules for their admission which were, to say the least, highly insulting for them. Briefly, these rules were[1] : (1) A nun, even of a hundred years standing, must make salutation to and bow down before a monk if only just initiated. In other words, a monk of whatever standing was always to be saluted by a nun of whatever standing. (2) A nun must not spend the rainy reason in a district in which there were no monks. (3) Every fortnight a nun must know from the monks the date of uposathā and the day fixed for monk's address (*ovāda*) to nuns. (4) A nun must perform pavāraṇā first in the bhikkhu saṅgha and then in the bhikkuṇī saṅgha. (5) A nun must take a *manatta* discipline first from monks and then from nuns. (6) A nun, trained in six pachittiya rules of bhikkuṇī pātimokkha, should seek upasampadā from both the saṅghas. (7) On no pretext a nun was to revile or abuse a bhikshu. (8) A nun must not admonish a monk and she must not prescribe any date for uposathā or pavāraṇā for monks; the official admonition of the nuns by monks, however, was not forbidden. *All these rules were never to be transgressed.*

Some of these rules were obviously framed from the point of view of the security of the nuns (for example, rule no. 2); but others were not framed with the same aim in view. From these rules it is

1. Horner, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-20; Chakraborty, *Asceticism in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1973, p. 221.

obvious that the Buddha subscribed to the notion of innate superiority of male over female. He apparently believed that the nuns should not be independent of monks; they were ever to remain dependent upon them for the performance of most of their ceremonies and for the authorisation of them all. The first and the last two rules, specially the first, were obviously made to make the nuns always remember that they were inherently inferior to monks because of their sex. One can understand the regulation that no one should abuse the others, but invidious discrimination made in respect of women is inexplicable. Why should a senior nun be not entitled to rebuke a junior monk in his failing ? When Mahāprajāpati Gotamī requested the Buddha to apply the rule of seniority for monks and nuns according to their relative status and not according to their sex, he is reported to have replied through Ānanda : "This is impossible Ānanda, and unallowable that I should so order... you are not, bhikkhus, to bow down before women,... or to perform towards them these duties that are proper (from an inferior to a superior)." Apparently, what the Buddha feared most was that the nuns might claim for themselve equality with if not superiority over monks while he himelf apparently believed in the inferiority of the fair sex.

From several other facts Buddha's attitude towards women becomes clearer. Firstly, it is to be noted that it was a pachittiya offence for a nun to ordain a girl who did not have the consent of her parents or husband. But in the case of male, only the consent of parents was sought, not that of the wife. Mention is frequently made of women who tried successfully, or unsuccessfully, to obtain their husband's permission.[1] Secondly, Buddha's opinion about women is reflected in the *Chullavagga* wherein he says : "If, Ānanda, women had not received permission to go out from the household life and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata, then would the pure religion have lasted long, the good law would have stood fast for a thousand years. But since, Ānanda, women have now received that permission, the pure religion will not now last so long. ... will stand for only 500 years."[2] Once he is known to have said, "He feels no pleasure when she comes, no sorrow when she goes; him I call a true Brāhmaṇa, released from passions."[3]

It can hardly be denied that the Buddha was always

1. Horner, *op. cit.*, pp. 149 ff.
2. *Chullavagga*, X; Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
3. *Ibid.*

sympathetic, courteous and helpful to his women contemporaries.[1] But, strangely, throughout the *Vinaya* the bhikkhus are represented as bringing their questions and difficulties directly to him, while the nuns are always represented as complaining through the medium of the bhikkhus; only Mahāprajāpati is said to have approached him directly probably on account of her kinship with him and her long standing in the saṅgha. The attitude of the Buddha percolated into the saṅgha.[2] It is best exemplified by an incident which took place after his death. It is reported that at the Council of Rājagṛha held during the first rainy season after the Nirvāṇa, an accusation was brought against Ānanda for first letting the women mourners defile the body of the Buddha with their tears.[3] It may be regarded as an indication of the Buddhistic attitude towards women during the age of the Buddha himself.

According to Horner, the association of the large number of educated women with early Buddhism proves what Buddha had done for the emancipation of the weaker sex. But it may reasonably be argued that the women of the age of the Buddha were not the product of Buddhism; they were born and brought up in the Brāhmaṇical society; it is another matter that they accepted the teachings of a great thinker of their age. Therefore, the academic and intellectual standard of the Buddhist ladies *of the age of the Buddha himself*—nuns and lay women both—cannot be regarded as the achievement of the Buddha or early Buddhism. The contribution of Buddhism for the betterment of the lot of women should be judged by its impact on them in the post-Buddha centuries. But for that evidence is extremely meagre. It is true that the existence of bhikkhuṇīs is mentioned in the schism edict of Aśoka, the Ceylones chronicles (which refer to the missionary activity of Saṅghamitrā) and some post-Aśokan inscriptions. But it is also a fact that as "compared with the number of vihāras for monks, the nunneries were few... no nunnery is heard from the enormous inscriptions of Nāgarjunikoṇḍa. Hence we may infer that the number and position of nuns were fast declining about the Kuṣāṇa period."[4]

Here, it may be mentioned that the attitude of the Buddha towards women was not in any way better as compared with other religious sects. For example, the Śvetāmbara Jainas recognised the

1. Horner, *op. cit.*, pp. 301 ff.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 308-09.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
4. Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p.222.

right of women for emancipation and organised their own nunneries. In the days of Pārśva, and even earlier, the Jainas had their own order of nuns who numbered in thousands. The earliest Jaina works speak of Niganṭhīs (*Kalpasūtras*) and there is a Buddhist reference to Ājīvikanīs in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Therefore, what the Buddha did in the late sixth century B.C. was not something 'revolutionary'; it had been done by Pārśva in the 8th century B.C. and was being done by several contemporaries of the Buddha in c. 500 B.C. And, significantly, his contemporaries like Mahāvīra did not raise any objection against admitting women into their saṅghas. As regards Brāhmaṇism, it should be remembered that it was not a missionary religion; hence it had no need to organise orders of missionary monks and nuns. Therefore, one cannot and should not expect the existence of Brāhmaṇical nunneries. If one maintains that Brāhmaṇical society gave equal religious opportunity to women, he can only be expected to show that in the early Vedic society women could participate in the performance of sacrifices and in the Upanishadic age in the cultivation of Brahmavidyā. And such was actually the case. In the Vedic religion performance of sacrifices depended upon the actual and equal participation in it by the wife of the householder.[1] That is why the *upanayana* of girls used to take place as regularly as that of the boys. Consequently they were given equal training in the Vedic lore also. In the Upanishadic age, ladies of the Brāhmaṇical society took active interest in the cultivation of Brahmavidyā. For example, Yājñavalkya's wife Maitreyī was more interested in finding out the way to immortality than in setting new fashions in dress and ornaments. In the philosophical tournament held under the auspices of Janaka, the lady philosopher Gārgī asked extremely abstruse questions. Ātreyī, a lady student of Vedānta, studied under sages Vālmīki and Agastya. In the Vedic society women like Sulabhā and Gārgī Vachaknavī even adopted homeless life. When the Buddha left home and proceeded in search of Truth, he was invited by two Brāhmaṇa female hermits to stay in their hermitages.[2] Pāṇini and Baudhāyana refer to Brāhmaṇical nuns and Kauṭilya uses the term *parivrājakā* in the sense of a nun.

In early Buddhism women were generally regarded as extremely unreliable, faithless and no better than household possessions.[3] In a number of references the early Buddhist texts class

1. Pande, G. C., *Origins*, p. 390.
2. Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, Calcutta, 1941, p. 87.
3. While advocating the cult of asceticism in his *Saundarananda* (VIII. 31.36),

them with inanimate objects and cows and horses.[1] In the *Mahāvagga* the Buddha advises Ānanda not to see women; and if it becomes necessary to see them, not to talk with them; and if it becomes necessary to speak with them, then to keep wide awake.[2] In the *Milindapañho* the Buddha is reported to have said that "with opportunity and secrecy and the right wooer all women will go wrong. Aye, failing with others, with a cripple even."[3] In the *Chullavagga* the Buddha opines that "unfathomably deep... is the character of women. They are like robbers with many artifices, with whom truth is hard to find, to whom lie is like the truth, a truth is like a lie. No heed should be paid to either their likes or their dislikes."[4]

Some historians have made an attempt to differentiate between the religious and social aspects of Buddha's attitude to women. It has been urged that though from the standpoint of religion, which demanded high moral discipline on the part of a monk, the Buddha appears to be anti-women, but in social sphere, he did not teach difference between man and woman.[5] But, as seen above, it is not true. The Buddha had no particular respect for women as members of society. Here, it may be noted that he did not concern himself with the problem of the lay women at all. Examples can be cited to prove that he cherished the ideal of the subservience of wife. Once he described seven kinds of wives to Sujātā, the unruly daughter-in-law of Anāthapiṇḍika. Four of these categories he described as virtuous. These are respectively of those wives who act as mother, sister, companion or slave; they go to heaven. The three kinds of non-virtuous wives behave like slayer, robber or mistress; they go to hell. Significantly, as a result of his teachings Sujātā decided to become a slave-like wife.[6]

Early Buddhist Monasticism

"The great practical achievement of the Buddha", Charles Eliot observes, "was to found a religious order (that is saṅgha) which has

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Aśvaghosha holds women as the greatest obstacle in the path of virtue. He makes the Buddha pronounce that women are like envenomed creepers, like unsheathed swords and like dens of horrible reptiles. According to him, an indignant serpent can be appeased but the heart of a woman cannot be subdued.

1. Indra, *The Status of Women in Ancient India*, Lahore, 1940, pp. 222-23.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 223-24.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
5. Sen, Madhu, in *Studies in Religion and Change*, pp. 101-10.
6. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, IV, pp. 92-93, quoted *ibid.*

lasted to the present day. It is chiefly to this institution that the permanence of his religion is due." In the early stage of Buddhism, however, the disciples of the Buddha led a wandering life residing in caves and forests and living on alms. They were personally ordained by the Buddha with the words *'Ehi bhikkhu'* (Come, O monk). After he had won over a number of adherents, in accordance with the custom of his age, he established a saṅgha. Some historians believe that before the First Council the Buddhist monks were very loosely differentiated from others as there was "merely a community of faith and spiritual alliance among them" and they lacked "any external bond of union." Yet, there is a possibility that even at that time there existed a set of regulations to be observed by all of them. The custom of the recital of Pātimokkha twice a month must have started in the life-time of the Buddha. He is also known to have been very particular in keeping a distinction between his disciples and monks of other sects with regard to dress, alm-bowl, etc.

The story of the Buddhist saṅgha begins with the conversion of the so-called 'Pañchavargīya' bhikshus. When the Buddha had sixty disciples, he gave them the right to ordain new converts because it was difficult for him to attend personally upon each and every ordination. But with the increase in the membership of the Order, innumerable complexities also made their appearance in the monastic code. Hence onwards monastic rules were quite often modified and changed and, when necessary, new rules were formulated.

As we have seen, at first Buddha had used a very simple formula for ordination. It merely invited and welcomed the applicant to embrance his *dhamma*. But in the ordination conducted by a bhikshu, the 'Tisarana' or 'Triśaraṇa' formula was used. Further, one who desired admission had to shave his head and beard and put on yellow robes. Then, he saluted the monks and repeated the Triśaraṇa formula thrice with folded hands. This was called the ordination (*pabajjā*, Sans. *pravrajyā*) ceremony. The new entrant was put, as it were, on probation. He was told in the very beginning about the Four Nissayas so that he could realize that in joining the Order he would have to face many physical discomforts. The rule requiring that parents should give their permission for the pabajjā of their son may be an old one framed on the request of Śuddhodana when Rāhula was ordained. The Buddha proscribed the ordination of men in royal service, of those suffering from serious disease, of those who were declared to be thieves and jail-breakers and whose names were written in the royal house on the charges of theft, and of those

who were castigated by whip and were branded as culprits, debtors and slaves.[1] On attaining the age of 20, a monk, if found fit, was given higher ordination (*upasampadā*).

The increasing number of the monks and the custom of rain-retreat led to the emergence of monastic establishments (*vihāras*) which were supported by the gifts of the devout laity in the form of buildings, money and material goods for the monks. Detailed rules were framed for the selection of the site of monasteries and also about the size of their rooms. Larger vihāras had rooms for every purpose—service-halls, store-houses, bath-rooms, etc. Ownership of monasteries was vested in the saṅgha. Later on, vihāras acquired huge properties, both movable and immovable, and became very rich. Thus, a fulfledged monasticism came into existence which explains the enormous number of Vinaya rules.

A monk who had obtained the *pabajjā* but not yet the *upasampadā* ordination was called Samanera (Sans. Śramaṇera). The Śramaṇera was required to take ten vows (*daśa śīla*) which are negatively formulated. These are : to abstain from (1) taking life, (2) taking what is not given, (3) practising abrahmacharya, (4) speaking a lie, (5) taking intoxicants, (6) taking food at wrong times, (7) indulging in dance, song, etc. (8) decorating the body, (9) sitting or sleeping on high seats and beds, and (10) receiving silver or gold. The first four of these constitute *pārājika* offences for which there is no 'cure', while the remaining six were considered of lesser importance, though also undesirable for a monk.

When monasticism acquired roots every *antevāsika* or junior monk was expected to select two persons, as his *upādhyāya* and *āchārya* respectively. The *āchārya* officiated for the *upādhyāya* in the latter's absence and thus the monk was never left totally free in his behaviour. The ideal of relationship between the *upādhyāya* or *āchārya* and the *antevāsika* was to be that of father and son. The *antevāsika* had to do all the services for his *upādhyāya* and *āchārya*, while they were expected to see that the young monk had all the required articles and to attend upon him if he was ill.

It is said that the Buddha borrowed the custom of *uposathā* from the Brāhmaṇical society at the suggestion of Bimbisāra. In the beginning in the *uposathā* ceremony the main teachings of Buddha were repeated. Later on, it assumed the nature of a confessional ceremony. The list of the possible offences (*pātimokkha*) was repeated before the assembled monks and those guilty of any of these

1. Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

made a confession for which they were punished according to the nature of their guilt.

Varshāvāsa, commencing from the full moon of Āshāḍha or Śrāvaṇa, was another custom commonly observed by the ascetics of Brāhmaṇa, Jaina and Buddhist faiths. During these three months the monks stayed at one place and were fully dependent upon the gifts of the laity of that area, who very often came to hear religious discourses. Therefore, the varshāvāsa came to serve as a link of close relationship between the saṅgha and the laity.

Pavāraṇā (Sans. *Pravāraṇā*) ceremony was held at the expiry of the varshāvāsa period. It was, like the pātimokkha assembly, a confessional assembly. But there was a difference also, for unlike the pātimokkha, in the pavāraṇā pātimokkha rules were not recited to the monks to ask them if they had committed any of the listed offences; on the other hand, in the pavāraṇā the monks themselves, in a very humble manner, requested the assembly to point out the sins that they might have unknowingly committed.[1] After the pavāraṇā the *kaṭhina* ceremony was held in which cotton cloth, provided by the laity and made up into robes, was distributed among the monks.

From the *Vinaya* it is clear that in the beginning the Buddhist monks observed strict rules regarding dress, etc. Besides three *chīvaras* of dull orange colour (an upper robe, a lower one and a sort of cloak) called saṅghāṭi, antaravāsaka and uttarāsaṅga, monks could use mantle, blanket, loin-cloth for the rainy season, bathing clothes, small cloths to be used in wounds, itches, eczema, etc., towels and bags. Alms-bowl was also a necessity for the monks. Among other permissible articles were needles, razors and nailcutters, duster to sweep the *āvāsa* and some other things of general use.

The Buddha was usually invited along with his disciples by the lay devotees for meals. Rules regarding food-taking were quite liberal in Buddhism. A monk could generally take anything in alms but could not express his wish for any particular kind of food. Use of medicines was not prohibited.

After renouncing the world monks found themselves in a new society bound by a common faith and a common disciplinary code. The seniors commanded due respect and were given first perference with regard to seat, water or food. If a monk fell ill, he was duly attended by some member of the saṅgha. The co-residents of the

1. For a detailed discussion on the main Buddhist monastic ceremonies see eq Saha, K., 'Buddhist Ceremonies', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1972, pp. 39-45.

āvāsa were the only relations of the monk and therefore the Buddha insisted upon mutual service. He also encouraged a healthy relation between society and the saṅgha. If a monk insulted a faithful householder, he became liable for punishment. A quarrelsome monk was penalized with such disabilities on account of which he immediately lost the right of conferring ordination. "A monk having an excessive relation with the laity or repeatedly violating the pātimokkha rules, became liable to *Niyassa-kamma*. A monk, who brought about any corruption among the laity or earned bad name for the saṅgha by his conduct, became subject to *Pabbhajanīyakamma*. *Paṭisaranīyakamma* was conducted against a monk who had offended a house-holder by making a false accusation. *Parivāsa* and *Manatta* might be imposed upon a monk who had been guilty of any of the *Saṅghādisesa* offences. A long list of disabilities is given that is to be imposed upon a monk under *parivāsa*."

During his life the Buddha was regarded as the head of the saṅgha and the acceptance of this fact was the first condition of admission into it as the Triśaraṇa formula *Buddhaṁ śaraṇaṁ gachchhāmi, Dhammaṁ śaraṇaṁ gachchhāmi, Saṅgham śaraṇaṁ gachchhāmi* proves.[1] However, it may be noted that in those days in such a religious Order the leader not only acted as its supreme head and controlled and regulated the life of the whole Order, but also nominated his own successor. Therefore, it was in accordance with the custom of the age that the question of the successor of the Buddha was raised by the disciples as well as by others outside the Order. The main cause of the rift between the Buddha and Devadatta was the desire of the latter to be nominated the successor of the former which was not conceded. This refusal paved the way for the introduction of a democratic pattern in the Order. The Buddha believed that the teacher could only show the way leading to the Ultimate. His declaration that it had never occurred to him that the Bhikkhu saṅgha was under his direction, is expressive of his concept of the democratic functioning of the saṅgha. He asked bhikkhus to take their refuge in themselves and in the Dhamma and not in any external agency. He advised them to attach importance not to the physical body of the Teacher but to his teachings (*yo dhamnaṁ passati so maṁ passati*). Therefore when, after the parinirvāṇa, Ānanda was asked by the Magadhan minister Vassakāra as to who would lead the saṅgha

1. Mahathera, Saddhatissa, 'The Three Refuges', *Mohābodhi*, XXIII, Nos. 6-7, pp. 167-68. Incidentally, the Triśaraṇa formula shows that the Saṅgha was raised to the status of 'the Buddha' and 'Dhamma'.

thereafter, the former could immediately answer that the monks would be guided by the *dhamma* itself.

In consonance with his belief the Buddha gave a democratic organisation to the saṅgha. The disputes in the saṅgha were solved in a democratic manner.[1] Monks living within a defined boundary (*sīmā*) elected their own *Saṅgha thera*. Most of the disputes were solved by the saṅgha in the presence of both the parties. Majority view was known by *śalākā grahaṇa*. The appointment of a *śalākā grāhapaka* was made to conduct the procedure. If the dispute could not be solved in the ordinary course the subject was entrusted to a committee called *Ubbahika*.

However, it should be remembered that the Buddhist saṅgha always had double aspect—it was regarded as a local body but the concept of the entire Buddhist saṅgha (*Chātudissa bhikkhu saṅgha*) as a unity was never lost sight of.[2]

The Buddhist saṅgha had two wings—*bhikkhu saṅgha* and *bhikkhuṇī saṅgha*. Special rules for nuns were formulated by the Buddha himself (see the section on Buddha's attitude to women).

The Buddhist saṅgha played a great role not only in the history of Buddhism but also in the general history of India and other Asian countries. It become a great missionary force. The Buddhist monks propagated the message of the Buddha throughout India and in other countries of Asia. It is certain that Buddhism could not have become an international religion without the help of the saṅgha. The local branches of the saṅgha became great educational centres. Actually, for centuries both higher and lower education in India to some extent remained in the hands of the Buddhist saṅgha. The Buddhist saṅgha imparted education not only in the subjects concerned with Buddhism, but also in subjects concerned with other religions and also in secular branches of knowledge. Nālandā Mahāvihāra is a great example of such institutions. The Buddhist vihāras became centres of artistic and cultural activities also. They produced great sculptor and painters—as the art and paintings of Ajanta prove.

The Buddhist vihāras indirectly became instrumental in the expansion of Indian languages, literature, arts and culture outside India. The impact of the Ajanta paintings on the paintings of Tung Huang caves in China or on the Sigiriya paintings of Ceylon is an example of this process.

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1. Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, pp. 204 ff.
2. *Ibid.*

Chapter 10

Indian Śramaṇas in Classical Writers, Early Dharmaśāstras, Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra and Aśokan Inscriptions

Ascetics of India in the Indica of Megasthenes

Alexander's invasion of India in 327 B.C., brought the Greeks for the first time in direct contact with this country. Alexander was accompained by some of the eminent men of science and letters of his times. They wrote valuable memoirs which are now lost but they furnished ample material to subsequent writers such as Diodorus, Plutarch, Strabo, Curtius, Arrian and Pliny. Only a few years after Alexander's invasion came Megasthenes, the Seleucid ambassador, to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. Unlike the historians of Alexander who saw only North-Western India, Megasthenes saw more of this country, at least up to Pāṭaliputra, modern Patna in Bihar. As he was a junior contemporary of Alexander's historians, his testimony on the ascetics of India, may be supplemented by, or at least compared with what they saw.

During Alexander's invasion and stay of Megasthenes in India, Brāhmaṇism was much more influential than Buddhism and Jainism. The opposing Śramaṇa groups were still thought of as a whole and none of them had gained enough influence and power to warrant particular attention of a foreigner. Data contained in the Indian sources fits very well with this conclusion. Indian sources also show that in the pre-Aśokan period, Buddhism had not yet become widespread rivalling other reform currents, primarily Ājīvikism and Jainism. However, Megasthenes undoubtedly heard about the Brāhmaṇa-Śramaṇa juxtaposition mentioned in the early Indian texts as well. Patañjali (2.4.12), for instance, underlines that the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas represented separate currents and stood in distinct opposition (*virodha*) to each other. But Megasthenes does not appear to have distinguished them properly on orthodox-heterodox lines.

He seems to have divided them on the basis of their remaining *in* or *out* of the society. In other words, for Megasthenes the main watershed passed between the Brachmanes (Brāhmaṇas) who, though divided into various sub-groups, lived *in* the society and performed various social functions, and the Śramaṇas in which, as we will show below, he mainly included the world-renouncing groups of the Brāhmaṇical society. It will also be shown in the sequel that though he has used the word 'Śramaṇa' for these groups, in actuality the features of the heterodox world-renouncers are only marginally reflected in his description.

Megasthenes on Brachmanes

After reproducing the testimony of Megasthenes containing a general description of the philosophers as the first section of the Indian society (in his Para 39), Strabo provides a detailed account of the two kinds of philosophers—Brachmanes (Brāhmaṇas) and Garmanes (obviously a mistaken reading for Sarmanes, that is Śramaṇas). His account of the Brachmane ascetics runs as follows :

> 58. Speaking of the philosophers, **Megasthenes** says that those who inhabit the mountains hymn the praises of Dionysus and point out as evidences the wild grape-vine, which grows in their country alone, and the ivy, laurel, myrtle, box-tree, and other evergreens, no one of which is found on the far side of the Euphrates except a few in parks, which can be kept alive only with great care; and that the custom of wearing linen garments, mitres, and gay-coloured garments, and for the king to be attended by gong-carriers and drum-beaters on his departures from the palace, are also Dionysiac; but the philosophers in the plains worship Heracles. Now these statements of **Megasthenes** are mythical and refuted by many writers, and particularly those about the vine and wine; for much of Armenia, and the whole of Mesopotamia, and the part of Media next thereafter, extending as far as Persis and Carmania, are on the far side of the Euphrates; and a large part of the country of each of these tribes is said to have good vines and good wine.
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> 59. Megasthenes makes another division in his discussion of the philosophers, asserting that there were two kinds of them, one kind called Brachmanes and the other Garmanes, that the Brachmanes, however, enjoy fairer repute, for they are more in agreement in their dogmas; and that from conception, while

in the womb, the children are under the care of learned men, who are reputed to go to the mother and the unborn child, and, ostensibly, to enchant them to a happy birth, but in truth to give prudent suggestions and advice; and that the women who hear them with the greatest pleasure are believed to be the most fortunate in their offspring; and that after the birth of children different persons, one after another, succeed to the care of them, the children always getting more accomplished teachers as they advance in years; and that the philosophers tarry in a grove in front of the city in an enclosure merely commensurate with their needs, leading a frugal life, lying on straw mattresses and skins, abstaining from animal food and the delights of love, and hearkening only to earnest words, and communicating also with anyone who wishes to hear them; and that the hearer is forbidden either to talk or to cough or even to spit; and if he does, he is banished from association with them for that day as a man who has no control over himself; and that, after having lived in this way for thirty-seven years, they retire, each man to his own possessions, where they live more freely and under less restraint, wearing linen garments, ornaments of gold in moderation in their ears and on their hands, and partake of meats of animals that are of no help to man in his work, but abstain from pungent and seasoned food; and that they marry as many wives as possible, in order to have numerous children, for from many wives the number of earnest children would be greater; and, since they have no servants, it is necessary for them to provide for more service from children—the service that is nearest at hand; but that the Brachmanes do not share their philosophy with their wedded wives, for fear, in the first place, that they might tell some forbidden secret to the profane if they became corrupt, and, secondly, that they might desert them if they became earnest, for no person who has contempt for pleasure and toil, and likewise for life and death, is willing to be subject to another; and that the earnest man and the earnest woman are such persons; and that they converse more about death than anything else, for they believe that the life here is, as it were, that of a babe still in the womb, and that death, to those who have devoted themselves to philosophy, is birth into the true life, that is, the happy life; and that they therefore discipline themselves most of all to be ready for death; and that they

believe that nothing that happens to mankind is good or bad, for otherwise some would not be grieved and others delighted by the same things, both having dream-like notions, and that the same persons cannot at one time be grieved and then in turn change and be delighted by the same things. As for the opinions of the Brachmanes about the natural world, **Megasthenes** says that some of their opinions indicate mental simplicity, for the Brachmanes are better in deeds than in words, since they confirm most of their beliefs through the use of myths; and that they are of the same opinion as the Greeks about many things; for example, their opinion that the universe was created and is destructible, as also the Greeks assert, and that it is spherical in shape, and that the god who made it and regulates it pervades the whole of it; and that the primal elements of all things else are different, but that water was the primal element of all creation and that, in addition to the four elements, there is a fifth natural element of which the heavens and the heavenly bodies are composed; and that the earth is situated in the center of the universe. And writers mention similar opinions of the Brachmanes about the seed and the soul, as also several other opinions of theirs. And they also weave in myths, like Plato, about the immortality of the soul and the judgments in Hades and other things of this kind. So much for his account of the Brachmanes.[1]

Analysis of the Testimony of Megasthenes on Brachmane Ascetics

From the account given above certain points are obvious :

(1) The distinction made by Megasthenes between those who inhabited the mountains and worshipped Dionysus, and those who lived in the plains and worshipped Herakles (Para 58) is not easily understood. As Strabo himself remarked: 'These accounts are fabulous, and are contradicted by many writers.'

(2) Megasthenes describes some special characterstics of the Brāhmaṇa ascetics and also some sub-sects within the broad groups included among them. His statement that their children, while in the womb, were kept under the care of learned men probably refers to the pre-natal sacraments (*saṁskāras*) prescribed in the *Dharmaśāstras*. Similarly, the statement that after their birth the children of the Brachmanes get more accomplished teachers as they advance in years, points to the Brāhmaṇical educational *saṁskāras*

1. Majumdar, R.C., *The Classical Accounts of India*, Calcutta, 1960, pp. 273-75.

such as Vidyārambha, Upanayana and Vedārambha (in the form they might have existed in that age) involving a graded system of education. Megasthenes probably also heard something about the *āśrama* system because he refers to the period of education of thirty-seven years after which one retired to his own possession where he lived more freely and under less restraint wearing linen garments and gold ornaments and partaking meats of animals that are no help to man in his work and marrying as many wives as possible in order to have numerous children. The reference to thirty-seven years of pre-householder stage life of a Brāhmaṇa reminds one of the *Manusmṛti* rule (III.1) which prescribes thirty-six years of *Brahmacharya āśrama* for Brāhmaṇas. What Megasthenes says about the life of the Brachmanes after they retire from the period of education is clearly a description of the *Gṛhastha āśrama*. That Megasthenes had a knowledge of the *Vānaprastha āśrama* needs no proof, for he mentions forest-dweller (*vānaprastha*) ascetics in detail while the *saṅnyāsa āśrama* probably had not yet separated from the *vānaprastha* distinctly enough to attract the attention of a foreigner (*infra*).

(3) Some of the points made by Megasthenes suggest that he had some information about the Upanishadic ideas as well. For example his statement that the Brāhmaṇas do not share their philosophy with their wedded wives, though not fully accurate, reflects the hesitation of the Upanishadic *ṛshis* in imparting their secret philosophy even to their wives. Yājñavalkya, for example, imparted his philosophy to his wife Maitreyī only after great persuasion. The fact that Megasthenes had heard something about the philosophy of the Upanishads itself is also clear. The idea that death is birth into the true life reminds one of the similar Upanishadic ideas and of the idea of the *Gītā* that death is merely like changing the old garments for new ones (*Gītā*, II. 22). Megasthenes also knew that the Brāhmaṇas confirmed their beliefs through the use of myths. The entire ancient Indian literature, including the Upanishads and the Epics etc., proves it.

(4) Megasthenes reference to the ideas of the Brachmanes such as judgements in Hades, that water is the primeval element of all things, that there is fifth natural element of which the heavens and heavenly bodies are composed and that soul is immortal also reflect the philosophical ideas found in the Upanishads. His reference to the opinion that the god who made the universe pervades the whole of it is an accurate description of Upanishadic pantheism. Evidently Megasthenes heard about these ideas during his stay in India towards

the end of the fourth century B.C. when the Upanishadic philosophy propounded by the great *ṛshis* must have been a subject of debate in Indian intellectual circles. Thus, Megasthenes seems to have included among Brachmanes not only ordinary Brāhmaṇas who lived on *dāna* and *dakshiṇā* (gifts and sacrificial fees), performed sacrifices for the state and private individuals and served as professional astrologers, but also householder *ṛshis* of the Upanishadic age of the type of Yājñavalkya.

Megasthenes on Garmanes (Śramaṇas)

According to the prevalent view, Megasthenes distinguishes the orthodox ascetics (Brachmanes) from the heterodox ones. In his Paras 60, 70 and 71 Strabo reproduces Megasthenes' description of Garmanes (obviously a mistaken reading for Sarmanes, that is Śramaṇas) which is generally regarded as a reference to the Buddhist and Jaina monks. This description runs as follows :

> 60. As for the Garmanes, he says that the most honourable of them are named Hylobii and that they live in forests, subsisting on leaves and wild fruits, clothed with the bark of trees, and abstaining from wine and the delights of love; and that they communicate with the kings, who through messengers inquire about the causes of things and through the Hylobii worship and supplicate the Divinity; and that, after the Hylobii, the physicians are second in honor, and that they are, as it were, humanitarian philosophers, men who are of frugal habits but do not live out of doors, and subsist upon rice and barley-groats, which are given to them by everyone of whom they beg or who offers them hospitality; and that through sorcery they can cause people to have numerous offspring, and to have either male or female children; and that they cure diseases mostly through means of cereals, and not through means of medicaments; and that, among their medicaments, their ointments and their poultices are most esteemed, but that the rest of their remedies have much in them that is bad; and that both this class and the other practise such endurance, both in toils and in perseverance, that they stay in one posture all day long without moving; and that there are also diviners and enchanters, who are skilled both in the rites and in the customs pertaining to the deceased, and go about begging alms from village to village and from city to city; and that there are others more accomplished and refined than these, but that even these themselves do not abstain from the common talk about Hades,

insofar as it is thought to be conducive to piety and holiness; and that women, as well as men, study philosophy with some of them, and that the women likewise abstain from the delights of love.

70. In classifying the philosophers, writers oppose to the Brachmanes the Pramnae, a contentious and disputatious sect; and they say that the Brachmanes study natural philosophy and astronomy, but that they are derided by the Pramnae as quacks and fools; and that, of these some are called "Mountain" Pramnae, others "Naked" Pramnae, and others "City" Pramnae or "Neighbouring" Pramnae; and that the "Mountain" Pramnae wear deer-skins, and carry wallets full of roots and drugs, pretending to cure people with these, along with witchery and enchantments and amulets; and that the "Naked" Pramnae, as their name implies, live naked, for the most part in the open air, practising endurance, as I have said before, for thirty-seven years; and that women associate with them but do not have intercourse with them; and that these philosophers are held in exceptional esteem.

71. They say that the "City" Pramnae wear linen garments and live in the city, or else out in the country, and go clad in the skins of fawns or gazelles;...[1]

Analysis of the Testimony of Megasthenes on Śramaṇas

The description of the Garmanes (Śramaṇas) as given by Magesthenes is highly interesting though somewhat confusing :

(1) It is generally believed that here Megasthenes is describing the heterodox ascetics, mainly Buddhist and Jaina. But to us it appears that in the Śramaṇas Megasthenes has included the world-renouncer Brāhmaṇical ascetics as well. Rather, it is more a description of Brāhmaṇical forest-dwellers than Buddhist and Jaina monks though the word Śramaṇa has been taken from the heterodox terminology. In other words, while among the Brachmanes Megasthenes has described those Brāhmaṇical goups which did not renounce the world such as *Śrotriya Brāhmaṇas* (performers of sacrifices for the state and private persons) who lived on *dāna* and *dakshiṇā*, astrologers and *ṛshis* (who lived in their *āśramas* but led a householder's life, such as Yājñavalkya of the Upanishads and Kaṇva of the *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*), his description of the Hylobii reminds one of the vānaprastha ascetics of the Brāhmaṇical society (*infra*). He points

1. Majumdar, R.C., *op. cit.*, pp. 275, 281.

out that they lived in the forests, subsisting on leaves and wild fruits, clothed with the bark of trees and abstaining from wine and delights of love.

(2) After this Megasthenes describes the physicians who used both medicines and sorcery. It indicates their identity with village medicine-men and *ojhās* and *tāntrikas* who were usually not different from village physicians in that remote period. They have also been identified by some with the Buddhist monks who are known to have taken interest in the medical treatment of the householders. But Megasthenes clearly states that the physicians described by him "do not live out of doors." Hence, they cannot be regarded as identical with the Buddhist monks who shunned cities and villages and lived in the forests though near to the cities and villages for begging of alms. Further, the physicians of Megasthenes practised fortitude as well by undergoing active toil as by enduring suffering, so that they remained motionless for a whole day in one fixed posture. Such practices were not recommended for the Buddhist monks.

(3) Besides these there were divines and sorcerers and those who were conversant with the rites and customs relating to the dead, and who went about villages and towns begging. Those who were more cultured than these, also allowed themselves to make use of popular ideas about hell which seem to make for godliness and purity of life. Thus, the description of various sections of these ascetics does not agree with what we know about Buddhist Śramaṇas.

(4) The Pramnae of Megasthenes, of all the three categories—Mountain, Naked and City—are also difficult to identify. Their description also seems to be a jumble of the description of different sects of ascetics. Bongard-Levin[1] points out that the word Pramnae is in probability a variant of Śramaṇa. They are said to have been 'contentious and disputatious' and opposed to the Brāhmaṇas. They ridiculed the Brāhmaṇas who studied natural phenomena and astronomy as 'conceited and fools'. Many Buddhist texts indeed describe such claims of the Brāhmaṇas as unfounded, delusive and false (*musa*) (*Dīgha Nikāya*, 3.84). In the *Tevijja Sutta* (13.15) the Buddha likens the Brāhmaṇas to blind people who preach what they neither know nor see themselves. "The words of these Brāhmaṇas become absurd (*hassaka*), idle (*nāmaka*), empty, meaningless (*rittaka*) and futile (*tuchchhaka*)." These Buddhist statements convey with accuracy the meaning of Strabo's words saying that the Pramnae made fun of the conceit and foolishness of

1. Bongard-Levin, *A Complex Study of Ancient India*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 201-02.

the Brāhmaṇas.

(5) But the identification of the Pramnae with the Buddhist Śramaṇas raises the question why have they been divided into three groups—Mountain, Naked and City. The Naked Pramnae, called Gymnetai or Gymnosophists, assuredly could not have been Buddhist. More likely they were Digambara Jainas who used to remain naked. But then they are said to practise endurance for thirty-seven years and associate with women without having intercourse with them. The period of 'thirty-seven years' reminds one of the Brahmacharya *āśrama* of the Brāhmaṇical society (in *Manu.*, III.1, the period of the first *āśrama* for Brāhmaṇas is actually given as thirty-six years) while association with women without having sexual relation with them suggests vānaprastha. The City Pramnae are also difficult of identify. They might or might not have been Buddhist monks.

Alexander's Historians on Indian Ascetics

The account of Megasthenes regarding the Brāhmaṇa and Śramaṇa ascetics may profitably be compared with the reports on this subject given by the historians of Alexander for they belonged to the same general period. Their accounts sometimes help us to understand Megasthenes better.

Aristobulus records that he saw two of the sophists at Taxila, both Brachmanes; and that the elder had his head shaved while the younger had long hair, and that both were followed by their disciples. They spent their time in the market-place, being honoured as counsellors and were authorized to take as a gift any merchandise they wished. They came up to the table of Alexander, ate dinner standing, and exhibited the feats of endurance like lying in the sun's rays and the rains, holding aloft in both hands a log about three cubits in length standing on one leg for all day long (when one leg tired, the weight of the body was put on the other leg). The younger followed Alexander a short distance, but soon turned back towards home, while the elder accompanied the king to the end. When he was with Alexander he changed his dress and mode of life. When reproached by some he replied that he had done it because he had completed the forty years of discipline which he had promised to observe.

Onesicritus reports that he himself was sent by Alexander to talk with the sophists for Alexander had heard that they always went naked and devoted themselves to endurance, and that they were held in very great honour, and that they did not visit other people when

invited, but bade them to visit them if they wished to participate in anything they did or said. Onesicritus found fifteen of them at a distance of twenty stadia from the city, who were in different postures, standing or sitting or lying naked and motionless till evening where they returned to the city; and that it was very hard to endure the sun, which was so hot that at mid-day no one else could easily endure walking on the ground with bare feet. Onesicritus conversed with one of them named Calanus (Kalanos, Kalyāṇa?), who accompanied the king as far as Persis and died in accordance with the ancestral custom, being placed upon a pyre and burned up. He says that Calanus happened to be lying on stones when he first saw him. He told Calanus that he had been sent by the king to learn the wisdom of the sophists and report it to him, and that if there was no objection he was ready to hear his teachings. But when Calanus saw the mantle and broad-brimmed hat and boots he wore, he laughed at him and said: "In olden times the world was full of barley-meal and wheaten-meal, as now of dust; and fountains then flowed, some with water, others with milk and likewise with honey, and others with wine, and some with olive oil; but, by reason of his gluttony and luxury, man fell into arrogance beyond bounds. But Zeus, hating this state of things, destroyed everything and appointed for man a life of toil. And when self-control and the other virtues in general reappeared, there came again an abundance of blessings."[1] Onesicritus adds that Calanus, after saying this, bade him, if he wished to learn, to take off his clothes, to lie down naked on the same stones, and thus to hear his teachings. Then Mandanis (or Dandanis) who was the oldest and wisest of the sophists, rebuked Calanus for his arrogance, commended Alexander because, although busy with the government of so great an empire, he was desirous of wisdom. Mandanis explained some of his ideas about the removal of pleasure and pain from the soul to Onesicritus and inquired whether such doctrines were taught among the Greeks. Onesicritus answered that Pythagoras taught such doctrines, and also bade people to abstain from meat, as did also Socrates and Diogenes. Mandanis answered that he regarded the Greeks as sound-minded in general, but that they were wrong in one respect, in that they preferred custom to nature; for otherwise, Mandanis said, they would not be ashamed to go naked, like himself, and live on frugal fare.[2] "And Onesicritus goes on to say that they (Indian Sophists) inquire into numerous natural phenomena, including prognostics, rains, droughts,

1. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, p. 277.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 277-78.

and diseases; ...and that they regard disease of the body as a most disgraceful thing; and that he who suspects disease in his own body commits suicide through means of fire."[1]

Nearchus speaks of the sophists as follows : That the Brachmanes engage in affairs of State and attend the kings as counsellors; but that "the other sophists investigate natural phenomena; and that Calanus is one of these; and that their wives join them in the study of philosophy; and that the modes of life of all are severe."[2]

In his Para 68, Strabo describes the death of Calanus as narrated by Nearchus. After reproducing this account Strabo adds: "But Megasthenes says that suicide is not a dogma among the philosophers, and that those who commit suicide are adjudged guilty of the impetuosity of youth; that some who are by nature hardy rush to meet a blow or over precipices; whereas others, who shrink from suffering, plunge into deep waters; and others, who after much suffering, hang themselves; and others, who have a fiery temperament, fling themselves into fire; and that such was Calanus, a man who was without self-control and a slave to the table of Alexander; and that therefore Calanus is censured, whereas Mandanis is commended; ..."[3]

The accounts of the historians of Alexander highlight some points about the Indian ascetics of the North-West. Firstly, they lived on the outskirts of the city in the day and returned to the city after the evening (a point which is usually missed by modern scholars). They subjected themselves to great physical tortures and mortification. The Greeks were greatly impressed by their feats of endurance. Secondly, they regarded death as nothing and committed suicide by rushing to meet a below or by plunging themselves into fire or deep waters if they suspected disease in their own body, though, according to Megasthenes, committing suicide was not a dogma among them. Thirdly, some of them remained naked but it is not clear whether they remained naked only when they practised austerities in the forest or they remained so even when they returned to the city after the evening. It is inconceivable that when they joined the table of Alexander, they were permitted to remain naked. Fourthly, their wives joined them in the study of philosophy. However, on this question the view of the Classical writers was not uniform. As noted

1. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*

above, in his Para 59 Strabo records that 'the Brachmanes do not share their philosophy with their wedded wives, for fear in the first place, that they might tell some forbidden secret to the profane if they become corrupt, and secondly that they might desert them if they became earnest.' However, in his Para 60 he notes that 'women, as well men study philosophy with some of them (that is, some of the sections of philosophers), and that the women likewise abstain from the delights of love.' It is quite possible that here Strabo was referring to the women *parivrājakas* or the Buddhist nuns. His description, however, suggests that the number of female philosophers was quite small, as it must actually have been the case. The testimony of Nearchus also reveals that the women of Sophists were allowed to join their husbands in the study of philosophy. It is quite possible that on this point both theory and practice differed from region to region and sect to sect.

Before Alexander and Megasthenes came to this country Buddhism was about two centuries old while the history of Jainism may be traced back to the Vedic age. Both of these religions preached the ideal of renunciation. But in the late fourth century B.C. Buddhist ascetic order was still gradually evolving. Its monks lived in *ārāmas* (parks) and caves just outside the cities, towns and villages and came to the inhabited areas for *bhikshācharyā* only. The practice of donating for them man-excavated caves and vihāras was just starting. They did not live naked, but wore two garments only. The practice of self-mortification and severe austerities was not current in the Order, though the monks were expected to remain celebate and lead a life of meditation and restraint.

In Jainism two streams of ascetic life are seen from the beginning : the Achelakas or Digambaras who lived naked and the Śvetāmbaras who wore white clothes. The rules of monastic life were much more severe in Jainism than in Buddhism.

Thus, before the arrival of Megasthenes in the court of Chandragupta Maurya and of the historians of Alexander in the North-West in 327-26 B.C., the scenario of Indian ascetic world had become quite varied and colourful—there being munis, yatis, vānaprasthas, saṅnyāsīs, Buddhist śramaṇas, Jaina monks and a host of others in the picture. It will indeed be too much to expect that Megasthenes, a foreigner, could understand the differences in the various shades of Indian ascetic life. That is why, in his description the ascetics who renounced the world, partly or wholly, have been put together without any consideration of their religion. Some of the points noted by them

are applicable to other Brāhmaṇical ascetics. For example, it has been argued that the name of Mandanis was Dandanis which might have been a corrup form of the term Daṇḍisvāmī. But the suggestion is highly fanciful. Probably the class of Daṇḍisvāmī saṅnyāsīs did not even exist in the fourth century B.C.

The reference made by the Greeks to the Buddhist and Jaina ascetics are mixed up with the description of the vānaprastha ascetics making it highly difficult to differentiate one from the other. It seems to us, however, certain that despite the use of the term Śramaṇa the description of the ascetics called Śramaṇas in the Greek accounts mostly reflects the tenets and actual life of the Brāhmaṇical vānaprasthas and only marginally those of the Buddhist and Jaina monks.

Ascetics in the Manu-smṛti and Other Early Dharmaśāstra Works

The description of Indian ascetics as found in Megasthenes and his Greek contemporaries may be examined and explained in the light of the early Dharmaśāstra literature. As shown in the previous chapters, asceticism in India has had a long history before the arrival of the Greeks. Ascetics are referred to in the *Ṛgveda* itself. The Keśī-sūkta (*RV*,X.136) delineates the strange figure of the muni who is described as long-haired, clad in dirty tawny-coloured garments, walking in the air or flying, delirious with the state of muni and inspired.[1] According to P.V.Kane, the people of the Aryan descent who led a life of meditation and mortification were called munis, while such persons of non-Aryan descent were called yatis. He also regards it possible that the yatis were non-Vedic sorcerers.[2] Later on, muni became a general term for Jaina and Buddhist ascetics, specially for the former, though it continued to be used, even if rarely, for the Brāhmaṇical ascetics as well. The term 'ṛshi' is generally regarded as synonymous with Brāhmaṇical 'muni' but actually the ṛshis were those ascetics who lived in forests, spent their time in performing sacrifices and meditation but were quite often married, maintained their households and did not have much hesitation in satisfying their sexual urge. Yājñavalkya of the Upanishadic fame, Kaṇva of the *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* and Parāśara of the *Mahābhārata* were such ṛshis.

With the growth of the *āśrama* organisation there emerged two categories of Brāhmaṇical ascetics or world-renouncers—the

1. Goyal, S.R., *A Religious History of Ancient India*, I, Meerut, 1984, p. 94.
2. Kane, P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. II, Poona, 1974, p. 419.

vānaprasthas and *saṅnyāsīs*. A *vānaprastha* was a forest-dweller, 'the one who stayed in a forest in a pre-eminent way'. He could go to the forest with his wife or could leave her in charge of his sons (*Manu.*, VI.3). The wife could accompany him if she so desired. The vānaprastha was to wear a dear-skin or a tattered garment (i.e. one of bark or *kusha* grass) and allow his hair and nails to grow (*Manu.*, VI.6). He was expected to live a life of complete continence and self-restraint (*Manu.*,VI.8). He could eat wild cooked corn or naturally ripe fruit (*ibid.*, VI.17). He practised severe austerities by standing in the midst of five fires (four fires in the four directions and the blazing sun over head), by standing in the open in rains, by wearing wet garments in winter and thus habituate his body to privations and mortifications (*ibid.*, VI. 23-24). At night he was to sleep on the bare ground (*ibid.*, VI.22).

The order of vānaprasthas was meant for the *dvijas* (that is, the three *dvijātis*). This agrees well with the testimony of Arrian according to whom the sophists could be from any caste. (According to the Dharmaśāstras, a Śūdra could not become an ascetic, but as Arrian did not know the Śūdra caste, for him the problem whether or not the Śūdras could become sophists did not arise). The *Mahābhārata* cites many examples of royal vānaprasthas. In the Ādiparva Yayāti is said to have become a forest-dweller after giving his kingdom to Puru. In the forest he practised severe austerities and ended his life by fasting. In the Āśramavāsī parva Dhṛtarāshṭra is said to have become a forest-hermit with his wife Gāndhārī who put on bark garments and deer-skin. Even queen Satyavatī, the grandmother of the Pāṇḍavas, her two daughters-in-law and Satyabhāmā and other queens of Kṛshṇa are said to have repaired to the forest to practise austerities there.[1]

As regards saṅnyāsīs, it is laid down in the Dharmaśāstras that in order to qualify for saṅnyāsa, a person, after leaving home, wife, children and other possessions, should dwell outside the village, under a tree or in an uninhabited house, and should always wander from place to place adopting the *munibhāva* (attitude of a *muni*) (*ibid.*, VI. 40-43). One of the principle rules for a yati was that he was to leave his wife and home and never to think of sexual matters or revert to the life of a householder.[2] He was to be a *tridaṇḍī* or an *ekadaṇḍī*, the word *daṇḍa* here used in the sense of a staff of bamboo or self-restraint. Manu (XII.10) declares that a man who has restraint

1. *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. II, Part ii, Poona, 1974, p. 947.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 923.

over his speech, mind and body is callèd *tridaṇḍī*.

By the time of *Manusmṛti* [1] two distinct ways of life had become evolved within the Vedic fold itself, Pravṛtti and the Nivṛtti. As Manu puts it—*Pravṛttam cha nivṛttaṁ cha dvividhaṁ karma Vaidikam* (XII. 88). The Vedic saṅnyāsīs were those who divided life into four āśramas and thus blended both the 'pravṛtta' and 'nivṛtta' doctrines of life (VI. 86, etc.). The Pravṛttas believed in *kāmya karmans* (XII.89) tending to secure happiness here and bliss afterward. On the other hand, the Nivṛttas believed in *moksha* (XII. 89) and knowledge without attachment as the highest ideals of existence.

Apart from these Vedic divisions of life, there existed followers of heretical sects (*Vedabāhyā smṛtayāḥ*, XII. 95) and believers of heterodox philosophies. Manu has only words of condemnation for such people.[2] The doctrines of the Vedas (*ārsha*) and the Smṛtis (XII.106) were not to be subjected to heterodox logic.

In the *Manusmṛti* the āśramas are made sequential in the order of their enumeration. It indicates for each āśrama one-quarter of the span of human life. The first is to be devoted to brahmacharya (IV. 1) living with the teacher, the second to gārhasthya (family life), the third (which is to be accepted only when the hair begin to turn grey, wrinkles appear on the skin and sons are born to sons) to forest-life, and the last to cutting away from society altogether by becoming a mendicant ascetic (VI. 3). In the third āśrama one had the option to leave his wife behind or take her with him. Manu is of the view that one should progress to saṅnyāsa stage after passing through each stage in accordance with its rules (VI. 88). There was also a view, to which reference is made in the *Jābālopanishad* (which is also supported by Śaṅkara) that one can proceed to the last stage straight from the first, after that stage is covered. But in this view no one can become an ascetic without undergoing the full period of studentship.[3] This interpretation is criticised on the ground that the Vedic injunctions to perform all one's life the Agnihotra, and to repay the triple natal debts (*ṛṇatraya*) can be discharged only in family life, which cannot, therefore, be skipped. Premature entry into ascetic life by one whose passions have not been conquered can only result in disaster. From the social point of view also one should not fly away

1. For the date of *Manusmṛti* vide Goyal, S.R., *Pre-Paurāṇika Hinduism*, Jodhpur, 2007, Ch. 7.

2. Agrawala, V. S., *India as Described by Manu*, Varanasi, 1970, p. 31.

3. Aiyangar, K.V.R., *Aspects of the Social and Political System of Manusmṛti*, Delhi, 1949, p. 138.

from his responsibilities to society (and to the gods, manes and seers) and seek refuge in asceticism. From an economic and materialistic standpoint a monk is a mere parasite and the limitless multiplication of monks can spell ruin to the country and the community. It is for this reason that asceticism is not commended to the economic members of society. Manu holds out the assurance of the attainment of supreme bliss only to the person who becomes a saṅnyāsī after going through the earlier stages. From the standpoint of the interests of the community, the first āśrama is vital as no one should remain uneducated. The second is also vital for the preservation of the social order. The two last āśramas are more important for their own members than to society, except in removing from active life men who had grown too old for efficient conduct of affairs, and thereby providing for them a natural mode of retirement. The third āśrama was not only open to Kshatriyas but was perhaps open to Vaiśyas also, as Manu uses the word *dvija* for the entrants to the *āśrama*. According to the *Vaikhānasa Dharmasūtra* (XIV. 117-118), however, all four āśramas are open to the Brāhmaṇa, all except saṅnyāsa to the Kshatriyas all but the last two to the Vaiśyas and only Gārhasthya to the Śūdras.[1]

Ascetics in the Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra

In the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, which according to our estimate was given its present form in the third century A.D.,[2] it is stated that a *pravrajitabhāva*, that is monkhood, other than the Vānaprastha should not be allowed in the countryside (2.1.32). This does not seem to apply to the *parivrājakas* of the Brāhmaṇical order, for these as a rule did not settle down anywhere for long duration. Apparently, the prohibition applies to monks of other orders, probably to prevent the spread of heretical sects.[3]

The followers of non-Vedic sects are referred to by Kauṭilya as *vṛshala* or *pāshaṇḍa*. Particular sects are, however, mentioned by name only at one place, where a heavy fine is prescribed for inviting monks of heretical sects (*vṛshalapravrajitān*), like the Śākyas and the Ājīvakas, to dinner in honour of the deities and the *pitṛs* (3.20.16). The Śākyas are, of course, the followers of the Buddha. It is interesting to note that the Jainas are not mentioned here.[4] At one

1. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
2. Goyal, S. R., *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, Jodhpur, 2000, pp. 16-52.
3. Kangle, *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, Vol. III, Bombay, 1965, p. 154.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

place in the text the *pāshaṇḍas* are assigned a place of residence at the end of or near the cremation ground along with the Chāṇḍālas (2.4.23).

Kauṭilya preseribes a fine for the offence of helping or inducing a woman to take to the life of renunciation and wandering (2.1.29). It pre-supposes the existence of *parivrājikās* or wandering nuns. They are said to form a useful class of secret agents. So did the apostates, that is those parivrājakas who gave up monkhood and returned to householder's life. The *parivrājikā* agent is described as a Brāhmaṇa widow, who has become a saṅyāsinī and who is honoured in the royal palace and has free access everywhere (1.12.4). Brāhmaṇa parivrājikās are contrasted with *muṇḍāḥ vṛshalyāḥ* 'heretical nuns with shaven heads', implying that the former did not get their hair shaved. It would seem that Brāhmaṇa widows took to such life when they found it difficult to maintain themselves. The Smṛtis generally do not encourage the life of nunhood for women. However, there is evidence in Sanskrit literature to show that though rare parivrājikās were not altogether unknown.[1]

Some duties and regulations prescribed for vānaprasthas are practically the same as those for saṅnyāsīs—specially concerning celibacy, restraint over senses, food restrictions, etc. But there are some differences as well. The vānaprastha could be accompanied by his wife, a saṅnyāsī could not. A vānaprastha had to keep fires, perform the daily *yajñas* while the saṅnyāsī had to give them up. A vānaprastha concentrated on tapas (severe austerities and self-mortification) while the saṅnyāsī was principally concerned with *saṁyama* (self-restraint) and contemplation of the Highest Reality.[2] This distinction between the two could not be understood by a foreign visitor like Megasthenes. He was bound to mix up their description. It is also quite likely that this distinction had not become marked by the time of Megasthenes and there was no clear line of demarcation between vānaprastha and saṅnyāsa; they rather coalesced into each other.

Brāhmaṇa-Śramaṇa Juxtaposition in the Aśokan Edicts

Aśoka mentions Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas together in several of his edicts. In R.E.III he refers to liberality to be shown to the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas (*bamhaṇa-samaṇānam dānam*). In R.E.XIII he declares that there is no locality other than that of the Yonas where the distinct

1. Kangle, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
2. Kane, *op.cit.*, pp. 928-29.

bodies of the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas are not found (*baṁhaṇa vā samaṇa vā*), and in R.E.IV pleads for seemly behaviour to the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas (*sapaṁṭipatī bramhaṇa samaṇānaṁ*). The respect for Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas finds mention as early as the *Dīgha Nikāya* where the Buddha points to 'Śamaṇa-Brāhmaṇas' as objects of highest respects. But in the juxtaposition of the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas the word Brāhmaṇa does not denote the caste but the Brāhmaṇical orders of ascetics. It seems that like the terms Dionysus and Heracles used by the Greeks for all the gods of India, *Śramaṇas* and the *Brāhmaṇas* were the two convenient terms to denote all the Indian *pravrajitas*, the *tāpasas* (hermits), *parivrājakas* (wanderers), munis, yatis and Śramaṇas (recluses), in short, the *religieux* who had renounced the wordly life of a householder, as also those who kept to household life, the *purohitas*, *ṛtviks*, *lakkhaṇa-pāṭhakas*, *śrotriyas*, *mahāsālas* or heads of Vedic institutions and the like, all entitled to receive gifts from the kings and public.

Actually, by the time of Aśoka the scenario of Indian ascetic world had become quite varied and colourful—there being munis, yatis, vānaprasthas, saṅnyāsīs, Buddhist śramaṇas, Jaina monks and a host of others in the picture. Megasthenes and other Greeks could not understand the differences in the various shades of Indian ascetic life. That is why, in their description the ascetics who had renounced the world, partly or wholly, were put together without any consideration of their religious affiliation. Hence, the overlapping and confusion in their description. But the description of the forest-dwellers as given by Megasthenes and other contemporary Greek historians more or less agrees with the description in the Indian texts of the vānaprasthas who lived in forests with or without their wives and indulged in extreme self-mortification. This is in agreement with the observation of Barua that in the Aśokan edicts Brāhmaṇa and Śramaṇa are two convenient terms to denote all the Indian religieux who had renounced the worldly life.

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Professor Goyal is deeply involved with the study of the history of Indian religions. Apart from the present monograph he has published *A Religious History of Ancient India* (Vol. I, 1984; Vol. II, 1986), *Harsha and Buddhism* (1986) and *A History of Indian Buddhism* (1987). All these works of his have been highly acclaimed and admired both in India and abroad.

Professor Goyal was honoured with the General Presidentship of the Silver Jubilee Congress of the Epigraphical Society of India held at Udupi in 1999 and was elected the Honorary Fellow of the Society. He is also to preside over the 90th Annual Conference of the Numismatic Society of India to be held at Santiniketan (West Bengal) on December 1-3, 2006. He has also been honoured with several festschrifts, including *Reappraising Gupta History for S.R. Goyal* (1992), *S. R. Goyal : His Multidimensional Historiography* (1992), *Rajasthan Bharati* in two volumes (1995) and a four volume festschrift entitled *Reconstructing Indian History for S. R. Goyal* (2003).

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